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How Exemplary Urban Superintendents Build Trust With and Between School Board

Members

A Dissertation by

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Brandman University

Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

February 2019

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February 2019

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“After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.”

—Nelson Mandela, Brainy Quotes

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and those who supported me along the way. I want to thank my mother Clarissa Wright, my father Eulice Wright, and my brother, Jared Wright, for lifelong support. While the seeds you planted did not necessarily grow immediately, I cultivated your wisdom and blossomed in time.

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“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

—Barack Obama

ABSTRACT

How Exemplary Urban Superintendents Build Trust With and Between School Board

Members

by Damon J. Wright

Purpose: The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the 5 domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust between board members.

Methodology: In this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, surveys and interviews were used to secure data from exemplary superintendents to identify, emphasize, and highlight the strategies they used to build trust with and between school board members. While the surveys enabled the researcher to identify strategies, interviews were used to acquire a deeper understanding of the superintendent's perspective on how to build trust with and between school board members.

Findings: The exemplary urban superintendents surveyed and interviewed for this research study emphasized the importance of the behaviors related to the 5 domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection when building trust with and between school board members. The exemplary urban superintendents also illustrated the importance of communication, establishing relationships, developing a rapport, and governance training when building trust with and between school members.

Conclusions: By identifying and describing the strategies exemplary urban superintendents use to build trust with and between school board members through the 5 domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection, superintendents, school board members and those aspiring to fill those roles can develop best practice protocols to strengthen their respective organization.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended, which will broaden, expand, and strengthen this study by replicating the study with a broader population, identifying strategies to restore trust once it has been compromised, identifying essential trust strategies by gender, and examining communication in greater depths.

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PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study superintendent and school board trust with many populations, four doctoral students, in collaboration with faculty members, developed a common interest in exploring the strategies exemplary superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with and between school board members. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of four doctoral students. This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was designed with a focus on the five domains of trust: *competence*, *consistency*, *concern*, *candor*, and *connection* using The Values Institute's trust framework by author Weisman (2016) to identify and describe the strategies superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with and between school board members. Each researcher administered a survey to at least 15 superintendents to determine what strategies they perceive as most important in building trust with and between school board members utilizing the five domains: *competence*, *consistency*, *concern*, *candor*, and *connection*. Then each researcher interviewed five superintendents who participated in the survey to determine what strategies they perceive as the most important in building trust with and between school board members. To ensure thematic consistency and reliability, the team developed the purpose statement, research questions, definitions of terms, interview questions, survey, and study procedures.

Throughout the study, the term *peer researchers* was used to refer to the researchers who conducted the thematic study. My fellow doctoral students and peer researchers studied superintendent and school board trust strategies with the following populations in California K-12 school districts: Edwin G. Cora, rural superintendents;

Theresa M. Giamarino, regional occupational centers and programs superintendents;
Daniel R.C. Scudero, suburban superintendents; and I studied urban superintendents.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Stephen Covey, while speaking at a 2009 Linkage leadership conference in Chicago, suggested that there is a trust crisis that is negatively impacting all organizations and society in general. Covey (2009) emphasized that the data that support the level of trust in culture, institutions, and companies are significantly lower than a generation ago. In 2009, only 49% of employees trusted senior management, and only 28% believed CEOs were credible sources of information; thus, organizational and societal consequences continued to impede progress (Covey, 2009). Interpersonal trust and trust in societal institutions dropped notably over a span of several decades, creating a work environment where Americans are less likely to report trust in others and are less likely to believe both public and corporate institutions are credible (Twenge, Campbell, & Carter, 2014).

The general public's concern about trust and honesty of leaders is prevalent across all organizations and government (Simpson, 2007). The general public reported confidence and trust concerns with leaders from various agencies. In fact, only 35% of the general public expressed confidence in 14 critical institutions including newspapers, banks, public schools, and Congress (Newport, 2017). Simpson (2007) suggested that trust is declining and the world is in a trust crisis. The findings from the Edelman Trust Barometer supported Simpson's suggestions (Edelman, 2017).

Confidence in the federal government has declined and remains dismal at best. The general public's trust in government has dropped 44% since October 1968 and was reported near historic lows in December 2017 (Pew Research Center, 2017). Mistrust of the federal government in Washington stems from uncertainty for its leaders *to do what is*

right. Shockingly, less than 20% of Americans expressed trust in government, 3% trusted the government *just about always*, and 16% trusted the government *most of the time* (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Skepticism and cynicism with businesses are equally problematic. R. F. Hurley (2006), in his article “Decision to Trust,” highlighted the 2002 GolinHarris Trust Survey, which indicated that almost “69%” of American respondents “agreed with the statement, ‘I just don’t know who to trust anymore’” (R. F. Hurley, 2006, p. 55), and 62% did not think CEOs were doing enough (R. F. Hurley, 2006). R. F. Hurley also highlighted a study conducted by the University of Chicago in 2002 and reported that out of the 800 Americans studied, “more than four out of five participants” had “‘only some’ or ‘hardly any’ confidence in the people running major corporations” (R. F. Hurley, 2006, p. 55). R. F. Hurley (2006) surveyed 450 executives from 30 companies worldwide and found that approximately half of the managers did not trust their leaders.

Trust is paramount for establishing and maintaining functional relationships (Basom, Young, & Adams, 1999; Fehr, 1988; Simpson, 2007). While scholarly contributions to trust theory have brought clarity to relationship development, the varying complexities continue to compromise interpersonal connections, particularly within the workplace. The connections between trust components and social capital theory include reliability, honesty, and the ability of others or institutions to promote cooperative relationships for mutual benefit (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 1995). Trust conceptualizes the confidence for individuals to rely on others, mainly when an emotional position of power or an area of vulnerability exists. With leaders and

institutions, including the public school system, receiving poor ratings, an imminent action is necessary to address the mistrust factors crippling institutions.

Trust in America's public education system is imperative to its success. Yet in a 2017 poll only 36% reported having confidence in public schools (Newport, 2017). While faith in American public schools is experiencing an upward trajectory with a 7% increase since 2012, the confidence rating remains 22% lower than its peak in 1973 (Newport, 2017). Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that trust was the foundation and the catalyst to establishing social relationships among adults and the key to successful school reform efforts.

A trusting relationship between the superintendent and the school board is vital to the success of the organization (Ament, 2013; Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000). A school board that trusts its superintendent not only demonstrates advocacy for school district initiatives but also protects the superintendent from special interest groups. Superintendents who trust the school board appreciate and solicit their insight and help them obtain funding to build capacity for programs (Cox, n.d.). Establishing trust between the superintendent and the governing board members is an optimal place to spark transformational change within the organization.

Background

Researchers have developed numerous definitions of trust. One definition supported by Bligh (2017) and Simpson (2007) describes trust as the bond that provides the confidence in people to develop and maintain productive relationships through the belief that another person's words and actions are well intended and reliable. While trust is infinite, the origins captured during the Axial Age, when human thought advanced

from the abstract to conscious truths (Mayer, 2009), set a foundation for modern-day theorists. Prominent philosophers of that era, including Plato and Confucius, had distinct cultural differences and beliefs, yet they commonly shared the importance of trust. Confucius viewed trust through a leadership lens and understood that an imbalance of power created risk and vulnerability. In fact, when provided only three resources to lead constituencies, Confucius believed rulers must prioritize trust over weapons and food (Lepard, 2005).

The world is more than two and a half millenniums removed from the Axial Age, yet the need to study and understand trust has accelerated to meet the demands of a complex society. Reflecting on Tschannen-Moran's (2014) belief that "trust is a glue that holds things together, as well as a lubricant that reduces friction and facilitates smooth operations" (p. 44), the rationale remains clear, the world is in the midst of a trust crisis (Covey, 2009; Edelman, 2018). The Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2018) memorialized the trust crisis by reporting the overall level of trust among the informed public in 28 countries. The study found that more than 50% of the countries surveyed distrusted institutions. Edelman (2018) believed that leadership's failure to respond to health care needs, financial scandals, and ineffective solutions to political crisis contributed to the mistrust.

Theoretical Foundations

Mistrust and incivility and leadership. In the 1960s, researchers Morton Deutsch (1962) and Julian Rotter (1967) indicated that mistrust compromises beliefs and expectations and influences behavior. More than 50 years later, mistrust continued to impede organizations. The political tone and climate in the United States have become

less civil and influence the level of trust Americans have with government institutions. In an NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll conducted in 2017, 70% of Americans believed political civility has deteriorated since President Trump assumed office. Furthermore, 95% of Americans felt civility was a problem, and 74% reported that civility has declined in the past few years causing incivility in the United States to reach crisis levels (Russell, 2017).

The implications of mistrust continue to impact leaders and damage constituencies. While both leaders and followers play critical roles in establishing, sustaining, destroying, and rebuilding trust (Bligh, 2017), it is the responsibility of leaders to demonstrate characteristics of trustworthiness that foster thriving relationships (Bligh, 2017; Turaga, 2013). In 1970, Robert K. Greenleaf coined servant leadership theory, which captures the characteristics of trustworthiness. A scan of historical leaders such Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., demonstrated attributes of servant leadership including interpersonal connectedness, and empathy during tumultuous times (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). The servant leadership approach commanded trust, shifted mindsets, and filled the trust gap (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Psychologists, sociologists, and theorists from multiple disciplines studied trust through various contexts, identified gaps in the research, and contributed to theoretical foundations. The complexity and specificity of trust has made it challenging to define, operationalize, and measure (Simpson, 2007). Various conditions also created challenges with accurately extracting, identifying, and interpreting trust in various stages of development and social situations (Butler 1991; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Holmes, 1981; Kelley, 1983; Kramer & Carnevale, 2001; Larzelere & Huston, 1980;

Simpson, 2007). Lifespan theorists, including Erikson and Bowlby, approach trust by measuring the impact adaptive behaviors had on an individual's development.

Psychosocial development. In the 1960s, lifespan theories including Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory both focused on the environmental factors that influence the evolution of behavior (Simpson, 2007). The theory of psychosocial development identified a heightened focus on the sense of self through Erikson's (1963) eight stages of the psychosocial conflict. The steps include trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair (Erikson, 1963; Simpson 2007). According to Erikson, individuals must resolve conflict within, and adapt to, the social environment at the identified stages of development. Unsuccessful resolution may impede the advancement of psychosocial development, thus impacting relationships (The Psychology Notes HQ, 2017; Simpson, 2007).

Attachment theory. In the late 1960s, Bowlby introduced attachment theory, which focused on psychological and emotional connectedness among people (Simpson, 2007). Similar to the psychosocial development theory, Bowlby's attachment theory operates under the premise that increased trust levels early in life foster stronger and more productive relationships (Simpson, 2007). Attachment theory also emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships between the child and the caregiver. In the absence of the child-caregiver bond, the child may exert energy seeking stability and security. This behavior impedes the desire to explore new relationships and experiences, causing a profound impact on trust in all aspects of life (Simpson, 2007).

Theory of cooperation and competition. Morton Deutsch (1973), arguably regarded as the pioneer of modern trust theory, conducted a multitude of studies including the Prisoner Dilemma Game (PDG) and developed theories including the theory of cooperation and competition. Deutsch (1973) provided insight into the relationship between social interactions within the environment and the impact it had on particular traits or behavior (see also Simpson, 2007). Deutsch explained cooperative and competitive interdependence through trust. He believed trust was present when the strength of positive motivations to take a position was less than the negative motivations present (Simpson, 2007; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). Also, Deutsch believed intrinsic security and belief of positive results should supersede fundamental expectations of negative outcomes (Simpson, 2007).

Interdependence theory. Components of interdependence theory originated with Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) social exchange analysis of dyads and small groups. Though their seminal work inspired prominent theorists, learning was reciprocated enabling Kelley and Thibaut to acquire the remaining components necessary to launch the theory of interdependence in 1978. The theory focused on the adaptation and learning from social experiences, which were not influenced by personal feelings or opinions.

Social capital theory. Social capital theory is often considered an overarching solution to theoretical, social, and political problems. Researchers to date have published numerous definitions based on the specific context of the research and complexity of the measured concept (Claridge, 2004). While many definitions exist, including input from seminal researchers, such as Coleman (1988), Bourdieu (1986), and Putnam (1995), a

focus on social relations that have productive benefits establishes commonality between the ideologies. The three components that encompass social capital theory include quality of social networks with an organization, the degree of trust toward leadership, and the intensity of universal norms and values (Dekker & Uslaner, 2001). Also Keeley (2007), representing the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), defined social capital as “networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups” (p. 103).

Covey-trust theory. Trust is paramount in the workplace, and without it, the organization is susceptible to destruction (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Covey and Merrill (2006) believed that both character attributes (integrity, motive, and intent with people) and competence (capabilities, skills, results, and track record) are the fundamental pillars of trust. High-trust leaders have strong personal credibility and the skills to build and develop trust with others, both interpersonally and organizationally (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Covey and Merrill also believed that high-trust leaders understand that speed and cost produces a tax or a dividend with every activity within a relationship or organization. Inspiring creativity and possibility through high-trust environments is the responsibility of the leader. Leaders may accomplish this goal through the following 13 behaviors:

- Talking straight or speaking candidly,
- demonstrating respect or genuine empathy,
- creating transparency or authenticity,
- righting wrongs or exercising humility,
- showing loyalty or sharing credit,
- delivering results or exercising competence,

- getting better or continuously improving,
- confronting reality or addressing challenges,
- clarifying expectations or providing clarity,
- practicing accountability or holding oneself and others accountable,
- listening first or listening to others before speaking,
- keeping commitments or following through, and
- extending trust or demonstrating the propensity to trust. (Covey & Merrill, 2006, p. xxii)

Tschannen-Moran-trust theory. Tschannen-Moran (2014) discussed the importance of trust through the lens of interdependence and vulnerability. The level of dependence required to maintain relationships, and the lack of control or uncertainty that others will follow through or act appropriately, are examples of interdependence and vulnerability (Baier, 1994; Bigley & Pearce, 1998; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Solomon & Flores, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran developed and concluded that the following five facets of trust would foster productive workplace relationships: benevolence, willingness to risk, competence, honesty, and openness.

Values institute framework. Trust is the most valuable asset within an organization, and it is fundamentally earned through values, not bought (Weisman, 2016). In 2016, Weisman indicated that values are the principles that give purpose to, bond relationships, and influence decisions. Values, which serve as the conduit to trust, are captured with five fundamental principles: (a) relationships vs. transactions, (b) purpose before profit, (c) transparency vs. opacity, (d) conviction vs. compliance, and

(e) advocacy over apathy. Weisman measured trust by using the following five C's on the pyramid of trust: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection.

Role of the Superintendent

Superintendents are the face of the organization. Much like an orchestra conductor or a general manager of a professional sports franchise, superintendents personify the aspirations and responsibilities of the organization through a shared vision of exemplary performance (DiPaola & Stronge, 2003; ERCA Group, 2010). As chief executive officers, superintendents are credited for the program successes and are held responsible for shortcomings (Meador, 2017). While the Colorado Association of School Boards (n.d.) believes that the primary responsibility of the superintendent is to work collaboratively, inform, and advise the school board on all matters relevant to the school district, superintendents must also navigate between educational leadership, managerial leadership, and political leadership (Meador, 2017; Mora, 2005; Weiss, Templeton, Thompson, & Tremont, 2015). Superintendents must possess a knowledge base of a teacher-scholar, the savviness of a business manager, the patience of a democratic leader, the understanding of social scientists, and the skills to communicate effectively (Weiss et al., 2015).

Role of the School Board

The school board is a collective of democratically elected officials tasked with providing citizen oversight of public schools (Ford, 2013). They are expected to have and acquire a breadth of knowledge and skills to serve the public. The California School Boards Association (CSBA) identified the following five primary responsibilities: setting direction, establishing an effective and efficient structure, providing support, ensuring

accountability, and providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district and public schools (CSBA, n.d.-b).

The school board is responsible for hiring the superintendent and evaluating the job performance to finalize personnel and contractual decisions. Responsibilities include job retention, contract extensions, and monetary compensation (Gore, 2016). Also, school board members establish and implement accountability measures to monitor the progress of the daily operations of the district. They oversee multimillion-dollar budgets; decide complex federal, state, and local regulations; make decisions regarding curriculum and instructional practices; and utilize the Brown and Public Records Acts to adhere to meeting requirements (Gore, 2016). Also, school board members work collaboratively with the superintendent to establish goals that are designed to support students, the school district, and ensure that the values and beliefs of the organization are representative of the community (Gore, 2016).

Team Concept—Superintendent and School Board

The superintendent and school board member relationships are mutually dependent upon one another by design. The legislative and executive branches of the government provide accountability systems that are designed to protect the public from the organization and the organization from the public (Ament, 2013; Danzberger, 1994; Hanover Research, 2014). The public education system is a local government agency and is not immune to the trust crisis. Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss, and Hoy (1994) suggested that the level of trusting interactions modeled by the superintendent and the school board frames the other professional interactions within the educational environment, yet without trust the working relationship between the superintendent and the school board

conflicts (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The reciprocal relationship requires superintendents and school board members to trust and rely on one another for guidance, policy development, and policy implementation, and effective governance (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016).

Importance of Trust in the Relationship

A trusting relationship between the school board and superintendent can affect the level of satisfaction with, and the performance of, the entire school district (Gore, 2016). Alsbury and Gore (2015), Delagardelle (2015), and Shober and Hartney (2014) suggested that the manner in which school board members interact with each other and with the superintendent may correlate with the outcomes of public school students. A thorough understanding of the scope of roles and the commitment to set clear and delineated parameters for effective governance is also necessary to build trust. Establishing ethical standards of operation to mitigate conflict is recommended to develop trust, and working relationships focused on student outcomes (CSBA, n.d.-b).

Clear and delineated governance structures must be in place to support the relationship between the superintendent and the school board. Hanover Research (2014) identified the following five fundamental principles for positive superintendent and school board relationships: (a) clarifying roles and expectations, (b) establishing and implementing clear communication protocols, (c) trust building and mutual trust commitments between the school board and administrative team, (d) evaluation system inclusive of the entire team, and (e) a commitment to work on and improve decision making.

Superintendent Challenges—Urban Districts

The National Center for Education Statistics (2018) established a framework and categorized school districts that were based on the U.S. Census Bureau definition of urban areas. The characterization stems from population counts, residential population density, and nonresidential urban land uses. Urban school districts are located within a territory inside of an urbanized area and principal city (EDGE, 2018). A city population of 250,000 or more is considered large, a population of less than 250,000 but greater than or equal to 100,000 is midsize, and a population of less than 100,000 is considered small (EDGE, 2018).

Superintendents within urban districts must develop relationships with various constituent groups, plan and implement a vision designed to move the organization forward, and work collaboratively with school board members within the politicized climate associated with big city districts (Council of the Great City Schools, 2010). The political nature of urban areas and the relationship with school board members may shorten the tenure of superintendents and their ability to address school reform initiatives. The average tenure of superintendents within urban districts is 3.18 years compared to the national average of 4.5 years (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014).

Addressing the Gap

Trust has been referenced and studied in great depths dating back to the Axial Age. Researchers continue to add to an abundance of literature by redefining and studying various segments of society. Recent research trends focus on trust within private businesses and corporations, and government agencies. Limited research exists on the means by which superintendents establish and maintain trust with and between

their school boards, particularly within urban school districts. It remains imperative that the school board and the school superintendent understand and establish trusting relationships to improve governance, ensure leadership continuity, and support system reform. This research study will attempt to fill the trust gap which exists between the superintendent and school board. This study will also fill the trust gap which exists among school board members.

Problem Statement

A trusting relationship between the superintendent and school board members serves as the conduit to organizational success (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Delagardelle, 2015; Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000; Gore, 2016; Shoher & Hartney, 2014). The highly visible relationship between the superintendent and the school board sets public perception and provides a foundation for the governance team to address the school district's mission, vision, core beliefs, and policies (Ament, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2003). Bryk and Schneider's (2002) seminal study of Chicago elementary schools found that high-trust school districts maintained a universal focus and commitment to advance the interests of students. The study also reported that teachers engaged in risk taking and innovative practices, and demonstrated a willingness and commitment to work beyond their scope of duty to improve student learning outcomes (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Conversely, mistrustful relationships between superintendents and school board members adversely impact the school district and the community. They compromise the organizational climate, impede productivity and reform, and compromise overall district stability, specifically with an increased superintendent turnover rate (Alsbury, 2008;

Ament, 2013; Bowers, 2016; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Research shows that superintendent and school board member relationships have deteriorated over the past few decades (Alsbury, 2008; Bowers, 2016; Hess & Meeks, 2010).

According to research, a positive correlation exists between employment longevity of both the superintendent and school board members and increased student achievement (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016). Despite the research, the national average for tenured superintendents in urban school districts is only 3.18 years (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014). The instability stemming from mistrust, and the high and rapid turnover rate in recent decades, contributes to the lack of improvement in K-12 public education (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; DeKoninck, 2009; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Schools located in urban settings face challenges, which mirror those consistent with high-poverty communities (Mirel, 1993). Standardized assessment results and college readiness measurements from socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English language learners, African American students, and Latino students indicate a significant achievement gap (The Education Trust-West, 2017). This research remains crucial because approximately 40% of students who attend schools in large cities will exit the program without the credentials, the skills, or the knowledge necessary for productive employment (Farrington, 2014).

Leaders within the public education sector, particularly local school board members and superintendents, face immense challenges. Superintendents and school board members must establish, promote, and practice trusting relationships to ensure leadership continuity and provide system reform, which supports a healthy climate and

achievement goals. Character attributes, such as respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity, contribute to the success and/or failure of the relationship (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust between school board members.

Research Questions

1. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through competence?
2. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through consistency?
3. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through concern?
4. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through candor?
5. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through connection?

Significance of the Problem

The California Department of Education governs one of the largest public school system in the United States, including 1,026 school districts, 10,477 schools, 274,246 teachers, and 6,228,235 students (California Department of Education, 2017). The school system has been plagued with conflict between the superintendent and school board contributing to high turnover rates at the superintendent position, incomplete initiatives, and low achievement success rates, particularly within urban areas (Byrd et al., 2006; Domene, 2012; Kowalski, 2006; Mora, 2005). The governance by design between the superintendent and the school board provides a balanced leadership structure to serve the public; however, mistrust between superintendents and school board members has impacted climate and morale, organizational performance and growth, and increased turnover rates (Ament, 2013; Bowers, 2016).

Mistrust negatively impacts organizations and urban communities outside of the K-12 system as well. The K-12 academic achievement rates predict that postsecondary unpreparedness will contribute to the lowest college completion rate in the developed world (Schultz & Mueller, 2006; Weissmann, 2014). Performance deficits also lead to adverse social and economic implications including decreased tax revenue, increased crime, decreased economic competitiveness, unemployment and expanded public assistance programs, and increased rates of mortality and public health concerns (Berfield & Levin, 2007; Mitra, 2011). The low return on both the financial and human resources investment has called for change initiatives. A trusting relationship between the superintendent and school board leads to successful education reform (Maxwell, 2013). This study sought to identify and describe the leadership strategies superintendents

perceive as most important to build trust with and between school board members. The findings will contribute to the current trust leadership research and provide strategies for enhancing relationships between superintendents and school board members.

Superintendents, school board members, and those aspiring to support or fill those positions may use the results of this study to understand the significance of trust within organizations. They may also use this research to assess the level of trust within organizations, identify the components of trust, and establish strategies to build and maintain trusting relationships. Trust within organizations will foster leadership continuity and extended tenures, thus providing a platform for superintendents to address education initiatives that promote climate and student achievement (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011).

Community members may use the results of this study to acquire an understanding of appropriate governance structures between the superintendent and school boards. Community members may gain insight into evaluating trust within relationships enabling them to diagnose and make educated decisions when considering elected officials and supporting superintendents. Students may benefit from a positive trust relationship through improved learning environments as well.

Definitions

The terms and definitions to follow are relevant to this study. The definitions derive from blending information from various trust literature spanning over multiple fields, including social science, private businesses and corporations, government agencies, and public education.

Competence. The ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Consistency. The confidence that a person's pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

Concern. The value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability and support, and motivate and care for each other (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010a; Covey & Merrill, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

Candor. Communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Gilley, 2012; O Toole & Bennis, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

Connection. A shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness (Oliver & Sloan, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016).

Trust. Weisman (2010) defined trust as follows:

An individuals' willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals. (p. 1)

Exemplary superintendent. An appointed executive hired to operationalize the policies and decisions of the school board. This executive leader serves as the board's

educational expert, charged with overseeing the management of business affairs, interacting with the community in a politically and culturally aware fashion, as well as fulfilling the role of communicator in chief (Björk & Gurley, 2005; Cuban, 1976; Kowalski, 2013; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010; Wright & Harris, 2010).

School board member. A locally elected official charged with governing a public school district and ensuring that the district respectfully responds to the priorities, values, and beliefs of the community. This elected official determines policies, makes strategic and fiscal decisions, requires accountability from the superintendent, and interacts with the community in a leadership role. Most importantly, this elected official governs as a member of a group, not as an individual (CSBA, 2016; Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Heiligenthal, 2015; Kowalski et al., 2010).

Urban school districts. Urban school districts are located within a territory located inside of an urbanized area, and principal city and suburban school districts are located within in a territory outside of a principal city (EDGE, 2018).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to 16 exemplary urban school superintendents employed in the California public school system. This study considers an exemplary leader to be one who demonstrates at least four of the following criteria:

1. Superintendent has worked 3 or more years in his/her current district.
2. Superintendent and board have participated in governance training.
3. Superintendent participated in annual CSBA conference.

4. Superintendent showed evidence of a positive superintendent, board, and community relationship.
5. Superintendent was recommended by two retired superintendents who are members of a north/south superintendents group.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduced the study. Chapter II provides an extensive review of the literature and research that has been conducted on trust within different professional sectors focusing on how superintendents build trust within and between school board members using Weisman's five domains of trust. Chapter III outlines and describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data used in the study. Chapter IV illustrates the data analysis from the interviews and surveys and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V reports significant findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The ambiguity and complexity of trust have perplexed scholars and researchers. The abundance of attention trust receives captures the undeniable importance of trust as it remains woven into the historical fabric (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; McKnight & Chervany, 2000; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 1995; Shapiro, 1987). Scholars have researched and redefined trust to explain the relationships and commitments within various fields of study. On average trust has over 17 definitions, which is approximately 4.7 more definitions than other words (McKnight & Chervany, 2000). Seminal researchers including Rotter (1967) not only contributed to trust definitions but also outlined characteristics of trust to provide context to the definition. Specifically, Rotter believed that trust is vital to the survival of any social group and defined interpersonal trust as “an expectancy held by an individual that the word promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon” (p. 651).

Cox (n.d.), from the American Association of School Administrators, considered the work of seminal researchers and provided a representation of trust within the field of public education. Cox believed, “Trust is the bedrock of all successful relationships, the foundation of a culture that supports risk-taking and innovation in continuous improvement efforts” (para.1). The culmination of attributes required to build trust seems routine, but on the contrary, it requires a concerted effort from all parties involved. Attributes such as respectful and honest communications, follow-through on promises, and a demonstrated interest in and consideration of others’ viewpoints are critical to developing trust (Cox, n.d.). Superintendents and school board members who can establish trust benefit from the valuable insight, which contributes to the overall mission

of the organization, including student learning, fiscal solvency, strategic planning, and implementation.

Chapter II introduces trust within different sectors of society and examines relationships among governance team members within public education. This literature review is organized into seven sections. The first section illustrates the significance of trust and highlights the sense of urgency with the global trust crisis. The second section outlines a historical perspective of trust dating back to the Axial Age, referencing prominent philosophers of that era. The third section includes a theoretical background section, which incorporates prominent trust theories, and the fourth section provides a theoretical framework centered around Weisman's (2016) five elements of trust (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection). The fifth section outlines a historical perspective of both superintendents and school board members, highlights essential job duties, details the relationship superintendents have with school board members, and school board members have with one another. The sixth section provides the reader with a brief overview of four different school district classifications to bring context to the thematic study. The final section of this chapter concludes with a summary of the literature on the importance of trust within the governance team structure.

Significance of Trust

Trust

Researchers and scholars reviewed statistics from various studies and polls, identified the ramifications of the global trust crisis, and highlighted the importance of trust in all sectors of society including government, the general public, and businesses. Trust experts concluded that trust is not only fundamental to the development and

maintenance of satisfactory and productive relationships, it significantly influences initiatives and targeted outcomes in both personal and professional relationships. For instance, Tschannen-Moran (2014), who studied trust within the public education system, and Simpson (2007), who focused on trust through a psychological perspective, both believed that trust is essential and may be the impetus for continual satisfaction and well-functioning relationships (Simpson, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Covey and Merrill (2006) and Paxton (2005) commented on the outcomes as they believed trust enhances positive outcomes in all facets of life and fosters prosperity, energy, and joy.

Researchers have recognized and conceptualized the significance of trust and memorialized their sentiments in various bodies of work. For example, when Kramer (1999) observed a heightened focus on trust, he stated, “Trust has moved to bit of a player to center stage in contemporary organizational theory and research” (p. 594). Simmel’s (1950) phrase, “Trust is one of the most important synthetic forces within society” (p. 326) also captures its significance.

Various theorists and scholars recognized the increased awareness regarding trust and contributed to the body of work. While the complexities of trust made it difficult to define and quantify, researchers and theorists created different variations of the term. For example, Rousseau et al. (1998) reiterated the work of previous researches by defining trust as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another” (p. 395). Covey’s economics of trust took a different approach as he quantified the importance of trust through two variables: speed and cost (Covey, Link, & Merrill, 2012). Covey and Merrill (2006) explained the economics of trust through the implementation of heightened

security measures at U.S. airports after the 9/11 attacks. Primarily, when trust diminishes, production speed is compromised, and costs increase. Conversely, when trust is present, the speed of productivity increases and the cost decreases (Covey & Merrill, 2006).

Mistrust

Damico, Conway, and Damico's (2000) statement, "Trust speaks to our hopes, and mistrust records our fears" (p. 379), not only captured the ramifications of mistrust, but it also reiterated the importance of trust. In 2017, the public candidly shared their dismay for institutions across the globe, expressing suspicion, lack of confidence in behaviors, and intentions of the leaders. The Edelman Trust Barometer surveyed people across 28 countries and collected data measuring trust in business, media, government, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). For the first time in their 17-year history, Edelman found that trust declined in all four areas measured (Harrington, 2017).

Approximately two thirds of the countries surveyed did not trust the four institutions to do what is right and the average level of trust in all four institutions combined fell below 50% (Harrington, 2017). Also, the United States is enduring an unprecedented crisis of trust (Edelman, 2018). When combining data from government, media, businesses, and NGOs, the United States recorded a 37% decline in trust, while countries such as China and the United Arab Emirates experienced significant gains (Edelman, 2018).

Government. The lack of faith in governments is mainly responsible for the trust gap within the United States. In 2018, the level of trust with the U.S. Government dropped 14 points to 33% among the general public and dropped 30 points to 33% among the informed public (Edelman, 2018). Also, 71% of survey respondents said government

officials are *not at all* or *somewhat* credible, which illustrated a staggering lack of confidence in leadership (Harrington, 2017). In a separate survey, the Pew Research Center (2017) reported historical lows with trust in the government. In a 2017 survey of citizens representing various political parties, Pew found that only 18% of Americans trusted government to do what is right just about always. The results were a sharp contrast from the historic highs in 1958 and 1964 when 73% and 77%, respectively, of respondents trusted the government to do what is right just about always (Pew Research Center, 2017).

Public. Trust in social relationships has declined over the past 50 years (Paxton, 2005). In The General Social Survey conducted in 2002, approximately 22% of respondents indicated that they could trust people compared to 43% who indicated they could not. The remaining participants either did not respond or reported a contingency. The results shifted significantly from the initial survey administered in 1972 when 46% reported that they could trust people, 49% indicated that they could not trust people, and the remaining respondents either did not answer or had contingencies (The General Social Survey, 2002). While political climates have contributed to the ebbs and flows of survey results, people's trust in other people had not experienced a relative high since 1984 when 47.5% of respondents trusted people, and 49% distrusted people, and the remaining respondents were undecided (The General Social Survey, 2002).

Businesses. The general public has historically afforded a relatively high level of trust to businesses. In 2017, the Edelman Trust Barometer reported that only 52% of the respondents indicated they trusted businesses to do what was right (Harrington, 2017). In 13 out of 28 countries surveyed, respondents distrusted businesses and advocated for

stronger licensing regulations and general reform, particularly within the pharmaceutical industry (Harrington, 2017). Respondents also communicated distrust with globalization as 60% of the general population feared of losing their jobs, and 53% believed the change in business and industry was moving too fast (Harrington, 2017). Sixty-three percent of respondents said CEOs are not at all or somewhat credible (Harrington, 2017). Also, in 2017 the credibility of CEOs fell by 12 points to 37% globally (Harrington, 2017). The concern with leadership stems from CEOs who are unwilling to speak out when the government does not take the lead on change. In fact, 64% believe CEOs should speak up to address issues; 56% reported that they have no respect for CEOs who remain silent on important issues (Edelman, 2018).

Historical Perspective of Trust

Trust and the Axial Age

German philosopher Karl Jaspers introduced the controversial term Axial Age to describe the period midway into the first millennium BC. During this period, significant cultural shifts transpired within societies across the globe. For instance, man became conscious of himself and his limitations, and universal spiritual truths surfaced (Lindenfeld, 2017). The spiritual revolution included seminal works, discussions, and debates from scholars including Confucius and Plato.

Plato focused on interpersonal relationships and trustworthiness. He believed that someone who gained trust did not necessarily equate to being objectively worthy of trust (Miller, 2015). Instead, individuals inspired trust through testimony. The testimony, or the art of persuasion, highlighted the subjectivity of the deficient cognitive state (Miller, 2015). Examples of the previously stated testimonials were captured in Plato's *The*

Republic (381 BC). Plato recounted a debate between Socrates and Glaucon (Plato's older brother) regarding human nature and trust through Socratic dialogue (Bailey, 2002). Plato highlighted both the vulnerability and confidence associated with trust by insinuating that when one gives trust to another, the trustee is relying on the other to protect something of great importance (Miller, 2015). Plato also believed that when affording trust, one person should only trust another if he or she believes that the consequence of violating trust and causing harm is enough to deter the person from exploiting the vulnerability (Miller, 2015).

Confucius also spoke of the importance of trust during the Axial Age. Known as the first teacher in China, his teachings remained prevalent in Chinese society for approximately 2,000 years and have since seen a resurgence (Rarick, 2007). Confucius developed the five virtues of Confucianism to provide guidelines for socially appropriate behaviors and roles within society (Rarick, 2007). The five virtues also stressed the importance of harmony through morality, hard work, loyalty and dedication, frugality, and a love of learning (Rarick, 2007). Confucius viewed trust through a leadership lens and understood that an imbalance of power created risk and vulnerability. In fact, when provided only three resources to lead constituencies, Confucius believed that rulers must prioritize trust over weapons and food (Lepard, 2005).

Confucius was strategic when he developed the five virtues of Confucianism. Confucius identified *Ren*, which translates to benevolence as the first virtue (Rarick, 2007). Leaders under this practice were held to a higher standard by leading their constituency through characteristics of trustworthiness, loyalty, and dignity (Rarick, 2007). *Yi*, or righteousness, was slated as the second virtue of Confucianism (Rarick,

2007). Confucius expected leaders to uphold the high standard of moral conduct within society. The third virtue is *Li*, or respectful relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and elders (Rarick, 2007). The fourth virtue is *Zhi*, or wisdom (Rarick, 2007). Confucius believed that society should honor the elder members in leadership positions for their experience versus their ability. The fifth and final virtue is *Xin*, or trustworthiness (Rarick, 2007). Leaders were expected to maintain a highly ethical orientation. In addition to being a trustworthy person, the manager was expected to be faithful to the mission of the organization.

20th-Century Leaders and Trust

Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are notable servant leader exemplars from the 20th century. These leaders served and met the needs of others instead of focusing on their own self-interest (Greenleaf, 1977). The servant leaders skillfully provided vision and clarity, uplifted and influenced supporters (McMinn, 2001), fueled motivation for leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002), and earned credibility and trust from constituents (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999) by focusing on inward leadership virtues (Daft, 1992).

Mahatma Gandhi's, Cesar Chavez's, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s humanistic approach to leadership projected empathy, commanded trust, shifted mindsets, and generated love (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Servant leadership not only enhanced the lives of the greater society, but it also provided a model for emulation. Universal advocacy and empowerment for participatory action reflected an understanding that people acquired deeper meaning by connecting with others and with a cause larger than themselves (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

The servant leadership style aligned with Eastern philosophies. Gandhi embraced an Eastern focus by practicing virtuous behavior including character-building traits of wisdom, courage, justice, and humility. In fact, he stated,

I see and find beauty in Truth and through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures, or songs are highly beautiful. People generally fail to see beauty in Truth, the ordinary man runs away from it and becomes blind to the beauty in it. Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise. (R. L. Johnson & Gandhi, 2006, p. 148)

Theoretical Foundations

Psychosocial Development Theory

Erik Erikson explained psychological development by focusing on personal identity and self-development over the human life span (Simpson, 2007). In the early 1960s, Erikson's beliefs challenged and deviated from existing theories that were widely accepted by seminal researchers. Erikson contradicted the views of prominent psychologists such as William James in 1890 who believed human character and personality became fixed by the age of 30 without the ability to change (Sneed, Whitbourne, & Culang, 2008). Also, Erikson (1962), who was predominantly influenced by Freudian principles, contradicted his mentor with the belief that the ego, not the id, served as the conduit to human development.

Erikson was a developmental life span psychologist who focused on the coherence of the ego maintained over a human life span (Berzoff, 2016). The ego is the component of one's self-existence or personal identity that contacts the outside world by utilizing thought, which includes thinking, perceiving, remembering, reasoning, and

attending to defend beliefs (Hamachek, 1988). Erikson utilized the ego framework to develop the theory of psychosocial development, which explained human functioning in eight predetermined stages that ranged from birth through adulthood (Berzoff, 2002; Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009; Hamachek, 1988). Also, contrary to previous theories, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development integrates an equally distributed relationship between the biological, psychological, and social development (Hamachek, 1988). Specifically, Erikson believed that the interpersonal experience, emotional aspects of life, the intrinsic behavior, and personality relate to society (Erikson, 1962, 1982; Hamachek, 1988).

The theory of psychosocial development requires all individuals to confront and grapple with an essential psychosocial problem or crisis (Munley, 1975). An individual's ability to resolve each crisis contributes to his or her psychosocial effectiveness and personality development (Munley, 1975). The theory of psychosocial development identified a heightened focus on the sense of self through Erikson's (1963) eight stages of the psychosocial conflict: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and ego integrity vs. despair (Erikson, 1963; Simpson, 2007). According to Erikson, individuals must resolve conflict within, and adapt to, the social environment at the identified stages of development. Unsuccessful resolution may impede the advancement of psychosocial development thus impacting relationships (The Psychology Notes HQ, 2017; Simpson, 2007). Finally, Erikson proposed that each stage would reach ascendancy at different points across the life span (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009).

Erikson used trust to establish the foundation for the theory of psychosocial development and wove trust themes throughout the theory. The first stage, trust vs. mistrust, takes place during the child's infancy in which the infant receives his or her initial exposure to social engagement and trust (Graves & Larkin, 2006). The infant seeks comfort, predictability, and security through the caregiver's consistent response to his or her intrinsic needs (Graves & Larkin, 2006). If the infant successfully establishes trust with the caregiver, the acquisition of confidence and security follows. Conversely, if the infant is unsuccessful in resolving trust crises insecurity, anxiety, and mistrust follow. Also, the infant would complete the stage exacerbating the inability to trust later in life (Poston, Hanson, & Schwiebert, 2012).

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory focuses on psychological and emotional connectedness among people over time (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969; Simpson, 2007). Similar to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, Bowlby's attachment theory operates under the premise that increased trust levels early in life foster stronger and more productive relationships (Simpson, 2007). The developmental outcomes beginning in infancy with sensitive, caring parenting remain present in both theories. Erikson's and Bowlby's parallel focus on the dependency between the infant and the caregivers lays the foundation for trust, security, and sociability. The psychosocial confidence builds the autonomy for greater exploration into more sophisticated environments and situations.

While many similarities exist between psychosocial development theory and attachment theory, Erikson's and Bowlby's fundamental beliefs contrast. Erikson's psychosocial development theory on ego psychology principles focuses on an

individual's inner growth, change, and how the experiences influence the relationships (Berzoff, 2002; Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009; Hamachek, 1988). Conversely, Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory derives from an object relations theory, which emphasizes evolutionary adaptation. Specifically, Bowlby believed that infants enter the world biologically equipped to form attachments with others as a means of survival (McLeod, 2008).

Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory focuses on the infant's intrinsic need for safe and secure environments. When the infant signals the caregiver with socially adaptive emotions, such as smiling or crying, the caregiver's response sets the foundation and serves as a model for either a secure or insecure attachment (McLeod, 2008). Caregiver responsiveness meets security needs and sets the foundation for future relationships.

Attachment regulates an individual's expectations of others and is a determinant of trust-based social interaction in personal relationships (Holmes, 2002; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). Secure attachment reflects an individual's ability to build and access strong social networks when needed. According to Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991), securely attached individuals demonstrate the capacity to secure, manage, and access the internal guidelines of their attachment system when needed. These individuals also have the wherewithal to act independently within the network when appropriate (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Simmons, Gooty, Nelson, & Little, 2009).

Trust is a characteristic of attachment as the vulnerability to the actions within the relationship are regularly present (Schoorman et al., 1995, 2007; Simmons et al., 2009). According to Rotter (1971, 1980), the predisposition to trust based on prior experiences

impacts the willingness to trust regardless of the perceived trustworthiness and/or perceived risk (Simmons et al., 2009). Lopez and Brennan (2000) added that secure adults demonstrate biases toward more trust of others based upon their active recall of more positive trust-based interactions from past experiences.

Theory of Cooperation and Competition

While trust has the most substantial influence on interpersonal relationships and group behavior (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975), trust also foreshadows cooperation (Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2008). The theory of cooperation and competition focuses on both the fundamental features of cooperative and competitive relations and the consequences of the different interdependencies (Deutsch, 2006). Arguably the senior expert on this theory, Deutsch (2006) indicated that substitutability, attitudes, and inducibility are critical to understanding cooperation and competition. Substitutability refers to how one's actions satisfy another person's intentions; attitudes refer to the predisposition one carries to respond evaluatively, favorably, or unfavorably to the environment or one's self; and inducibility refers to the readiness to accept another influence to do what he or she wants (Deutsch, 2006).

Deutsch (1983) used promotive and contrient interdependence to describe the goals and actions of a particular situation. Promotive interdependence correlates a position between participants, causing parallel outcomes. Deutsch analogized it as sinking or swimming together based on a mutual liking or affinity for one another, sharing joint membership or values, or a dependency to accomplish tasks (Deutsch, 1983, 2006). Conversely, contrient interdependence refers to goals that are negatively correlated thus increasing the probability of an imbalance of power and generating a clear

winner and a clear loser (Deutsch, 1983). Contrient interdependence may stem from dislike or sheer greed, a win at all costs attitude (Deutsch, 1983, 2006).

Deutsch (1983) also explained characteristics of group dynamics through the lens of cooperation and competition. For instance, groups that are independent demonstrate effective intermember communication, teamwork, agreement, and similarities in values, and collaboration in problem solving (Deutsch, 1983). Conversely, the lack of purposeful collaboration fuels the competitive process, which carries the belief that the solution to the conflict can be imposed by one side or the other (Deutsch, 1983). Individual interests surface as players assert their power to minimize the interest of the opposing side. When the dispute escalates, players invest emotionally, and the conflict becomes a matter of principle and players are less likely to succumb to defeat.

Interpersonal trust is a crucial component to understanding cooperation and competition (Lewicki, Tomlinson, & Gillespie, 2006). Deutsch (1958) defined trust as follows:

Asserts that an individual may be said to have trust in the occurrence of an event if he expects its occurrence and his expectation leads to behavior which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivational consequences if it is confirmed. (p. 266)

While theorists generally explain trust in either a psychological or a behavioral tradition of trust, the behavioral approaches explain cooperation and competition through rational-choice behavior, such as cooperative choices in a game (Hardin, 1993; Lewicki et al., 2006; Williamson, 1981). Behavioral approaches to trust are grounded in

observable choices made by a participant in an interpersonal context (Lewicki et al., 2006).

Researchers, including Deutsch, have used the Prisoner Dilemma Game (PDG) to simulate and measure trust through cooperative actions and mistrust through competitive actions during the game (Lewicki et al., 2006). For example, many studies have shown that cooperation in the PDG increases when players exercise candor by clearly communicating their expectations to one another and when players follow through on their intentions (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Interdependence Theory

Kelley and Thibaut (1978) formally launched their interdependence theory after reflecting and building upon their previous work on dyads and small groups through the social exchange analysis in 1959 (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Victor & Blackburn, 1987). Interdependence theory places more emphasis on the external players or the integration of the group versus focusing on the inner self, which differs from early developmental theories such as psychosocial theory and attachment theory (Victor & Blackburn, 1987). Thus, interdependence theory shares more similarities with Deutsch (1973) and his theory of cooperation and competition. A focus on group dynamics or between people and the influence the behavior of others has on the group and one another (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008) are present in both theories.

According to Kelley and Thibaut (1978), interdependence theory targets not only the means by which individuals influence one another but also the essence of their interaction in securing valued outcomes (Bantham, Celuch, & Kasouf, 2003). This belief validates the importance of relationships by placing as much relevance on the relationship

among people as on the individual (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). Thibaut and Kelley explained the influence, interactions, and outcomes of relationships by analyzing both the level of satisfaction and the amount of dependence within them (Bantham et al., 2003; Kelley, 1979; Kelly & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Satisfaction relates to the feelings that are generated by an assessment of the comparison to a standard or expected outcome within a relationship. Dependence relates to the level as the lowest level of outcomes a partner will accept based on the alternative options (Bantham et al., 2003; Kelley, 1979; Kelly & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Matrices and transition lists were used as tools to represent the outcomes (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008).

Interdependence theory shares some of the characteristics of developmental trust theory. While individuals may develop trust or mistrust tendencies based on prior experiences (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Wieselquist et al., 1999), interdependence theory strongly opines that trust is relationship specific and varies based on a history of behaviors and actions during the course of a relationship (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008).

Wieselquist et al. (1999) found that interdependence variables account for more than 30% of the variance, and actor-based variables account for only 5% of the variance. The data suggest that the actions of the partner are more critical than trait-based expectations (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). Unlike trait-based theories, the results suggest that the responsibility for present behavior is mutually shared with all participants (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Interdependence theory also suggests that the real component of trust does not merely rest in the mind of the perceiver

but instead demonstrates how traits such as trustworthiness factor into building trust (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Wieselquist et al., 1999).

Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory is considered one of the most relevant sociological theories to date (Lin, 1999a, 2005; Portes, 1998, 2000). The abundance of interest garnered from theorists perpetuated different variations to the theory and generated conflicting viewpoints (Lin, 1999a). Although each viewpoint brings uniqueness, Lin (2001, 2005) found that most seminal researchers, including Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Portes (1998), and Putnam (1995), agreed that social capital theory focuses on the assets that one acquires through social networks. Also, Portes (1998) compartmentalized social capital theory into the following three categories: social control, family-mediated benefits, and resources mediated by nonfamily networks.

Bourdieu and Coleman are seminal social capital theorists who focused on the benefits coming to individuals or small groups based on individual or family connections (Portes, 2000). The two theorists believed social capital required a social network but cautioned that social capital and social networks are not commensurate nor synonymous (Lin, 2005). Bourdieu and Coleman recognized and compared the intangible nature of social capital to tangible forms of capital. Specifically, it's not the individuals within the group who provide advantages with social capital theory but the structure within the relationship that fosters benefits (Portes, 1998).

Bourdieu and Coleman shared distinctly different beliefs as well. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized

relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248; see also Hazleton & Kennan, 2000; Portes, 1998, 2000). Bourdieu’s (1986) definition suggests that the profits gained from group membership are made possible by the social relationship, which provides access to resources through membership and commitment to the group (Bourdieu, 1986; Hazleton & Kennan, 2000; Portes, 2000). Bourdieu believed that social capital provides access to other forms of capital including economic and cultural capital by enabling individual access through membership (Portes, 2000). Through membership, individuals trade other forms of capital to progress and continue development (Portes, 2000). Membership in social networks is not automatic or guaranteed; instead, individuals must cultivate relationships through a group acculturation process (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu’s (1986) work mirrored the latter portion of Portes’s (1998) definition of social capital. Social capital became defined as “(1) a source of social control, (2) a source of family-mediated benefits, and (3) a source of resources mediated by nonfamily networks” (Portes, 2000, p. 2). In fact, Bourdieu believed that people strategically establish relationships and build social networks intentionally for future benefits (Bourdieu, 1986; Hazleton & Kennan, 2000; Portes, 2000).

Where Bourdieu (1986) focused on nonfamily networks, Coleman (1988) focused on the first portion of Portes’s (1998) definition as a source of control. Coleman (1988) defined social capital as “a variety of entities with two elements in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain action of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure” (p. S98; see also Hazleton & Kennan, 2000; Portes, 1998). Coleman supported his ideations with examples of internalized norms such as submitting to public laws thus giving others the trust and

confidence to interact in society without fearing for their safety. Coleman's (1988) description of norms and sanctions addresses this practice.

Coleman (1988) linked social capital to trust. In fact, he believed social capital theory relies on the trustworthiness of the social environment to operate under societal norms including the commitment to reimburse debts and the extent of debts held (Coleman, 1988). Specifically, if an individual does a favor for another with the assumption that the favor would be reciprocated, trust was extended within the relationship. If the recipient of the favor fails to reciprocate the deed, the individual who conducted the favor may have misinterpreted the level of trust between the two thus leading to an unpaid debt and mistrust (Coleman, 1988). This quid pro quo approach includes elements of trust, beliefs from Plato's vulnerability and confidence associated with trust, the five virtues of Confucianism, and the value placed on relationships from the interdependence theory.

Trust Theory

Five faces of trust. Tschannen-Moran (2014) believed that "trust is one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, reliable, and competent" (pp. 19-20; see also Mishra, 1996). Similar to interdependence theory, Tschannen-Moran believed that an individual cannot meet his or her interest without depending on another party. The vulnerability that exists stems from whether or not the other party would follow through on commitments or act according to societal norms (Rousseau et al., 1998; Solomon & Flores, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) established the five faces of trust, which possess characteristics of the five relationships of Confucianism. Tschannen-Moran, similar to the trust theories previously mentioned, focused on the willingness to risk or an individual's level of confidence in the particular situation of vulnerability (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Tschannen-Moran referenced Deutsch's (1960) explanation of risk to support her position. In fact, Deutsch indicated that when an individual increases his or her level of vulnerability to another individual, the rationale is often difficult to understand but typically related to despair, conformity, impulsivity, innocence, virtue, faith, machismo, or confidence (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) identified benevolence as the first and perhaps the most important face of trust. The overarching theme of benevolence encompasses self-care and goodwill. Specifically, benevolence refers to the confidence that an individual's well-being or something of importance remains unharmed by the person entrusted to protect the individual (Baier, 1994; Zand, 1997), essentially exercising mutual goodwill (Putnam, 2000), and not exploiting or capitalizing on opportunities at the expense of another (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996). In the absence of trust in benevolence, productivity in the relationship or the interaction decreases as the opposing parties exert excessive energy preparing for the betrayal (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Tschannen-Moran's (2014) second face of trust is honesty, which she and seminal theorists Butler and Cantrell (1984), Cummings and Bromiley (1996), and Rotter (1967) consider fundamental features of trust. Honesty encompasses an individual's character, integrity, and authenticity (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Specifically, honesty validates the belief that both communications and promises are accurate and honored (Tschannen-

Moran, 2014). A pattern of disconnect between an individual's words and actions and a pattern of broken promises fosters mistrust. While a credible explanation accompanied by an apology may momentarily bridge the trust gap, a pervasive pattern of dishonesty may damage an individual's reputation for character, integrity, and authenticity (Simons, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Tschannen-Moran's (2014) third face of trust refers to the willingness to accept the vulnerability when disclosing relevant information to others (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Zand, 1997). Tschannen-Moran (2014) indicated that openness fosters a reciprocal level of trust and confidence that the information exchanged will not be exploited. Conversely, nondisclosure and guarded behaviors elicit suspicion and foster distrust through fear of manipulation or exploitation (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Kramer & Tyler, 1996; Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Tschannen-Moran's (2014) fourth face of trust is reliability or a blend between benevolence and predictability. Predictability carries both negative and positive connotations as an individual may consistently demonstrate undesirable behaviors. The benevolent portion of the responsibility trait adds an element of confidence that an individual will meet expectations consistently. Benevolence mainly carries great importance when interdependence factors into the reliability as group members should not exert energy or manufacture anxiety worrying if the team members will meet expectations (Butler & Cantrell, 1984; Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

The previous four faces of trust focused on behavioral and relational aspects of trust. Tschannen-Moran's (2014) final face of trust focuses on possessing the

competence, or the skill set, to accomplish a task to standard. Competence carries importance because a well-intended group member may aim to meet expectations of the group; however, if the individual does not have the aptitude to meet the demands of the people dependent upon him/her, the group will not trust (Baier, 1994; Mishra, 1996; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Waves of trust. According to Covey and Merrill (2006), trust includes confidence, loyalty, and mutual behavior, which impact all aspects of life. Through leadership development, Covey and Merrill focused on addressing the global trust crisis and identifying behaviors and strategies designed to maximize efficiency by cultivating trusting relationships. Specifically, Covey and Merrill quantified trust through the economics of trust, provided strategy to address mistrust through the waves of trust, and identified 13 core attributes of trust as a self-reflective tool.

Covey connected trust to character and competence and embedded the attributes throughout the five waves of trust (Covey, 2009; Covey & Merrill, 2006). Covey used the five waves of trust metaphorically to describe the inside-out process required to earn and sustain trusting relationships (Covey & Merrill, 2006). While the first two waves, self-trust and relationship trust, are used to provide content for character attributes, the second two waves, organizational trust and societal trust, were used to describe competence (Covey, 2009; Covey & Merrill, 2006).

Covey (2009; Covey & Merrill, 2006) placed great emphasis on self-trust and included the four cores of credibility to demonstrate the importance of character attributes. Covey believed that integrity is essential to developing and maintaining trust. He described integrity as living out one's values and beliefs (Covey, 2009; Covey &

Merrill, 2006) and believed individuals must possess self-confidence to set and accomplish goals, honor commitments, and walk their talk. Covey identified intent as the second core element to describe character. Intent describes the motives, intentions, and resulting behavior from interaction with people (Covey & Merrill, 2006). Covey and Merrill (2006) also believed that hidden agendas communicate suspicion and foster distrust.

Capabilities and results were used to describe competence or the skill set of an individual to effectively accomplish the identified task (Covey, 2009). Specifically, capabilities identify the confidence that one's talent, mindset, knowledge base, and strategy are adequate to produce the desired results, also possessing the skills to establish, develop, and restore trust with others (Covey, 2009). Covey identified results as the final core as it focuses on the historical performance or track record of accomplishing tasks successfully. Reflecting on Tschannen-Moran's (2014) five faces of trust, Covey's (2009) third and fourth cores aligned with Tschannen-Moran's (2014) fifth face of trust, competence.

Organizational trust analyzes the means by which leaders generate trust (Covey, 2009; Covey & Merrill, 2006). Specifically, Covey and Merrill (2006) focused on minimizing destructive behaviors, crippling organizations, and replacing them with trust dividends. Covey and Merrill identified market trust, which focused on the importance of reputation through transparency. While Covey and Merrill used market trust to illustrate the importance of trust, "The Values Institute and the Center for Brand Values Communication and Research have determined that five distinct dimensions or

variables of trust must be assessed in any measurement of a brand's trustworthiness" (The Values Institute, n.d., para. 1).

Theoretical Framework

Weisman (2010) defined trust as follows:

An individual's willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals. (p. 1)

Weisman (2016) developed the pyramid of trust as a means to evaluate performance and measure success (see Figure 1). The pyramid of trust consists of the following five elements: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection (Weisman, 2016). Considering a pyramid structure similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, competence and consistency rest at the base of the pyramid and serve as the

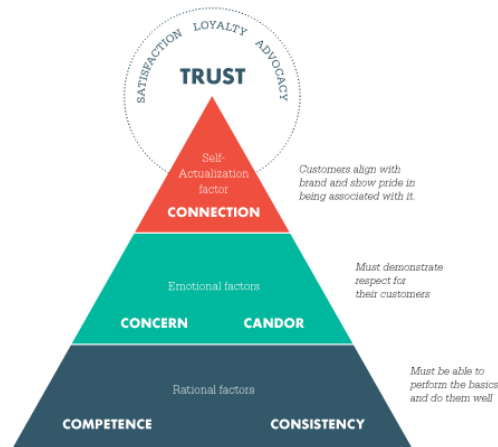


Figure 1. The pyramid of trust. From *Choosing Higher Ground: Working and Living in the Values Economy*, by M Weisman with B. Jusino, 2016. Santa Ana, CA: Nortia Press. Copyright © Michael Weisman.

foundation of trust (Weisman, 2016). Concern and candor, which exhibit functional abilities, were placed in the center of the pyramid (Weisman, 2016). A connection is the ultimate goal of value-driven relationships. Weisman strategically placed connection at the top of the pyramid because he believed the acquisition of connection brings loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy.

Competency

Competency is the first element Weisman (2016) incorporated at the base of the pyramid as a fundamental structure of trust. Weisman defined competency as the operational efficiency to produce the service expected, essentially alluding to the training and skill set of the individual assigned to the task and the wherewithal to complete the requirements.

Several researchers have discussed the importance of competency levels of the trustee as a component of trust and have contributed to the body of literature (Twyman, Harvey, & Harries, 2008). Twyman et al. (2008) found a strong correlation between competence and trust. The significance of competence within trust is invaluable, particularly within dyadic relationships. In fact, competency is the component of trust that links relationships within organizations (Gabarro, 1987; Mishra, 1996) and developing relationships and making transactions with stakeholders (Barber, 1983; Mishra, 1996; Sako, 1998).

Seminal works have confused novice researchers because of the various synonyms used to describe competency (Schoorman et al., 1995). Earle, Siegrist, and Gutscher (2012) added that competence is a variable of trust, and the terms should not be used interchangeably, mainly because trust is based on shared values, and confidence is

bonded to a performance criterion (Das & Teng, 1998). Although terminology differs, the collective understanding of competence refers to skills that influence a specific domain (Butler, 1991; Butler & Cantrell, 1984; Kee & Knox, 1970; Lieberman, 1981; Mishra, 1996; Rosen & Jerdee, 1977; Schoorman et al., 1995).

Consistency

Reflecting on the complexity of developing trust to establish and maintain relationships, Weisman (2016) identified this consistency as the second fundamental value supporting the pyramid of trust. Weisman defined consistency as the measure of stability and reliability by using the organizational structure as the dependent variable. Primarily, does the company or the individual honor commitments, and does the brand or person reflect the identified values (Weisman, 2016)?

Weisman's (2016) belief parallels prominent researchers including Covey and Merrill's (2006) "walking your talk" (p. 54) and Harvey and Drolet's (2006) belief that consistency results from actions and behaviors that are congruent with words that promote trust. Furthermore, White et al. (2016) believed that reliability, dependability, and one's ability to follow through on promises and expectations over time leads to consistency.

White et al.'s (2016) emphasis on repetition and time not only shared similarities with Weisman (2016) and Bradberry and Greaves (2009), but the focus extended to the abundance of time it takes to build trustworthy relationships. Furthermore, cultivating trust is not only done by consistently demonstrating and developing a reputation of high integrity (Kellogg, 2017), but it also requires a reciprocation by all parties involved (Richardson, 2016). Along with interdependence, affability, honesty, and extension of

trust, consistency is the fifth condition that not only contributes to integrity but also is required to build and maintain professional relationships (Harvey & Drolet, 2006). The inability to keep commitments impacts consistency and prohibits and decimates trust (Covey & Merrill, 2006; White et al., 2016).

Concern

The concern dimension of trust is multifaceted, mainly balanced between self-interests and the welfare of others (Mishra, 1996). When concern for others exists in the relationship, there is a belief that one party will not take an unfair advantage over the other (Bromiley & Cummings, 1993; McGregor, 1967; Mishra, 1996); instead the parties will take an active interest in one another (Barber, 1983; Mishra, 1996; Ouchi, 1981). Ideally, when a concern is present, self-interest is balanced by the interest in the welfare of others (Mishra, 1996).

Weisman's (2016), explanation of concern shares similarities with that of Mishra (1996). When examining the business sector, Weisman indicated that concern measures if a brand or business genuinely cares about the people they serve. The commitment to relationships and the needs of people during daily interactions identify and measure the values (Weisman, 2016). Before an individual decides to trust, he or she engages in an internal process with identifiable factors, which can be analyzed and influenced (R. F. Hurley, 2006). R. F. Hurley (2006) developed a trust model that includes 10 factors describing the process individuals use to trust or not to trust. Concern was of importance; R. F. Hurley identified it as a situational factor the trustee used to address and gain confidence in others.

R. F. Hurley's (2006) interest in the global trust crisis prompted him to study top executives. He found that a manager's self-centeredness and unwillingness to demonstrate a more significant concern by making him or herself vulnerable by advocating for constituents and their causes stagnates trust. Conversely, a manager shows benevolent concern by putting him or herself at risk for his or her employees, which demonstrates trust, loyalty, and commitment (R. F. Hurley, 2006). Greenleaf (1977), the originator of servant leadership, believed that leadership must meet the needs of the constituents by placing the focus on and generating motivation from others rather than on their own self-interests.

Candor

Weisman (2016) recognized the diminished trust and morale within organizations and included candor into the center of the five domains of trust. Weisman referred to genuineness and transparency in communications when discussing candor, and they believed that candor serves as the deciding factor when choosing between two entities or brands. Communication is the key to building trust and fostering healthy relationships (Zeffane, Tipu, & Ryan, 2011). Zeffane et al. (2011) concluded that good communication reduces the probability of misperceptions and mistrust and enhances the likelihood of loyalty and commitment. Warren Bennis, the founding chairman of the Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, utilized his expertise to advise four U.S. presidents and more than 150 CEOs in leadership and change management. Bennis (1999) identified candor as the most critical component of trust. When one establishes a culture of honest, critical feedback, he or she removes the organizational barriers by fostering productive relationships (Bennis, 1999).

Exercising candor differs from truth telling as candor more accurately embodies the achievement of honesty often by revealing risk, contention, openness, and authenticity (Paolozzi, 2013). Covey and Merrill (2006) understood the importance of candor as they identified straight talk in their 13 behaviors of high-trust leaders. Much like Bennis (1999) and Paolozzi (2013), Covey and Merrill (2006) believed communication should be honest and truthful so others know where individuals stand. O'Toole and Bennis (2009) used the term organizational transparency to subscribe to the importance of candor. O'Toole and Bennis (2009) referenced Robert Blake and Jane Mouton's examination of NASA's findings on the human factors involved in airline accidents. O'Toole and Bennis reiterated that the pilots who relied on intuition or gut instincts to problem solve at the first indication of a potential accident made the wrong decision more often than the pilots who utilized an inclusive approach by acknowledging the problem and seeking input into the decision making.

Candor is the healthy flow of information throughout the organization (Bennis, Goleman, & O'Toole, 2008). According to Bennis et al. (2008), "For any institution, the flow of information is akin to the central nervous system: the organization's effectiveness depends on it" (p. 3). It is common for organizations to have poor communication practices that lead to communication gaps. Instead of avoiding courageous conversations, Bennis et al. believed organizations must foster open communications that are received and reciprocated by all parties. Glaser (2015) supported this argument by reiterating that the organizations that exhibit high levels of candor produce the highest and most successful performing teams and the most important success factor in transformation and change. Glaser used prefrontal cortex or executive brain research to

link openness and honest communication to improve thinking and the ability to work through challenges successfully. She stated, “When we learn how to be candid; we are able to spend more time exploring what success looks like with others—not just my success—our shared success” (Glaser, 2015, n.p).

Connection

Weisman (2016) recognized the importance connection plays in trust as they placed it at the top of the pyramid to signify the ultimate goal of values-driven relationships. A connection is the hardest trust value to accomplish as it requires the four previously mentioned dimensions: competency, consistency, concern, and candor (Weisman, 2016). Weisman used a business analogy to describe connection to show how well customers align and identify with the brand. Weisman stated, “The potent combination of rational and emotive trust factors builds up to the one dimension of self-actualization which requires the participation of the consumer” (p. 140).

The importance of connection is commonly referenced in trust theory, particularly in social exchange theory. Randall, Gravier, and Prybutok (2011) reported that connection is necessary for social exchange and measures relational connectedness as the emotional attachment with the service organization and consumer. Morgan and Hunt (1994) highlighted the maturation process of acquiring brand loyalty through positive attitudes and relationships over time. In addition to communication and relationship termination costs, Morgan and Hunt believed that shared values foster trust and commitment (Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman, 2001).

Weisman’s (2016) values economy aligns with the five virtues of Confucianism; the servant leadership styles of Dr. King, Mahatma Gandhi, and Caesar Chavez to build

their constituencies; and dyadic trust theories used to define cooperation and interpersonal relationships. Weisman utilized components of dyadic trust theories to explain the societal shift from a transaction economy, where the economic exchange served as the bottom line, to a values economy, where a belief or a higher moral purpose attracted people for partnership.

In a study conducted by the *Harvard Business Review*, 64% of American consumers established and maintained relationships with particular brands because they share similar values (Freeman, Spenner, & Bird, 2012), and 92% of American consumers indicated they would give up brands entirely if the organization did not demonstrate integrity (Weisman, 2016). The lack of trust that consumers have in industries sparked transformational shifts with American consumers moving support to companies that demonstrate trustworthiness and share similar values (Weisman, 2016).

Shared values are the foundation of trust (Weisman, 2016). Weisman (2016) believed that trust develops within relationships when people risk vulnerability by eliminating facades and honoring their individuality and when people demonstrate the wherewithal to reveal information or beliefs in greater depth. Weisman also believed that trust separates prosperous relationships from shallow relationships that fail to materialize. The following five traits support essential values of a values-driven organization: relationships, purpose, transparency, conviction, and advocacy (Weisman, 2016). The five traits of the values economy potentially benefits leaders within public education, particularly superintendents and school board members. Hatch (2009) stated, “The success of school improvement efforts depends on the opportunities and relationships that educators cultivate outside the school” (p. 16).

Governance Team

School Board-Historical Perspective

Local school board members are democratically elected officials entrusted by their respective state to serve the community and govern the public schools (B. L. Johnson, 1988; Land, 2002; National School Boards Association [NSBA], n.d.). The configuration of the school board structure experienced significant transformation since the late 1800s to address rapid population growth (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Land, 2002). The governance structure evolved from selectmen, to appointed committees, to the formalized election process (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Land, 2002). School board members located in urban areas were elected from neighborhood wards, which subjected the school system to neighborhood politics, corruption, and resulted in inadequate education with diverse student populations (Danzberger, 1992, 1994; Kirst, 1994; Land, 2002; Rothman, 1992; Urban & Wagoner, 1996; Usdan, 1994).

During the early 20th century, the last significant school board reform transpired. Local educational governance shifted to a smaller, centralized school board, whose members were selected through citywide elections (Danzberger, 1992; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994; Kirst, 1994; Land, 2002; Rothman, 1992; Urban & Wagoner, 1996). The restructure enabled school board members to focus on policy while chief executive officers or superintendents focused on the administrative aspects of governance (Danzberger, 1994; Danzberger & Usdan, 1994; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994; Kirst, 1994; Land, 2002). The 20th-century restructure also brought more educational,

socioeconomic, and professional affluence to local school boards (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994; Land, 2002; Urban & Wagoner, 1996).

Role of the School Board

Governance bears responsibility and accountability for the overall operation of the school district (McCormick, Barnett, Alavi, & Newcombe, 2006). Governance teams that demonstrate effective practices typically engage in the development of and deciding of the district's mission, policies, and cultural structures (McCormick et al., 2006; M. Wood, 1996). The previously mentioned practices contribute to the strategic direction, organizational goals, and organizational performance (Kroll, Wright, Toombs, & Leavall, 1997; McCormick et al., 2006). Also, a primary role of local school boards is to ensure that the school district aligns and responds effectively to the values, beliefs, and priorities of the community (CSBA, n.d.-b). The CSBA (n.d.-b) identified the following five core functions: (a) setting direction, (b) establishing an effective and efficient structure, (c) providing support, (d) ensuring accountability, and (e) providing community leadership as advocates for children, the school district, and public schools.

Setting Direction and Community Leadership

CSBA (2017) identified the organizational planning and setting of the district's mission and purpose as the core responsibility for local school board members. The mission will clarify the districts existence and the goals they seek to accomplish (S. Jackson, Farndale, & Kakabadse, 2003; Kaufman & Herman, 1991; McCormick et al., 2006). School board members serve as the democratic liaisons to the community and are tasked with the responsibility of assessing community values and interests and incorporating the synthesis into federal and state guidelines (D. W. Campbell & Greene,

1994; Carol et al., 1986; Griswold, 1997; Land, 2002). Including community voice into the vision, strategic planning, and evaluation fosters transparency and builds trust (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Land, 2002).

The NSBA (n.d.) also identified leading and modeling collaboration and trust as a core responsibility for school board members. Several researchers have concurred and also identified trust and collaborative relationships as an essential characteristic of school governance (Carol et al., 1986; Danzberger et al., 1992; McCormick et al., 2006; Speer, 1998). Research shows that school board members often experience challenges in working collaboratively as a cohesive group. Members of the school board represent the collective values of the community and collectively operate as one governing body. When school board members step outside of their designated role and serve as the single representative to stakeholders, trust becomes compromised (McCormick et al., 2006).

Accountability Structures

The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) listed the hiring of the superintendent as a primary duty of the school board as well. When hiring the school superintendent, school boards must exercise a significant amount of trust in the superintendent's leadership, competence, and wherewithal to implement the vision (Gore, 2016). Also, establishing a positive and productive relationship between the school board and the superintendent, which includes respect, trust, confidence, support, and open communication, is essential for effective school governance (Anderson, 1992; Carol et al., 1986; McCormick et al., 2006). The school board also evaluates the superintendent's performance and finalizes personnel and contractual decisions. The responsibilities include job retention, contract extensions, and monetary compensation (Gore, 2016).

According to Gore (2016), “When a school board evaluates a superintendent, the full weight of the governance structure exercises authority to examine and hold accountable the system in which it governs (p. 6).

Providing Support

Historically, school boards have provided financial oversight (Land, 2002; Resnick, 1999) including approving school district budgets, negotiating with labor unions, approving service contracts, and promoting revenue-generating campaigns such as grants, bond measures, and parcel taxes. Also, school boards are expected to avoid financial insolvency by not overspending because of an overestimation of resources. School boards must plan, pay attention to, and understand financial audits and track spending efficiently as well (Land, 2002; Noonan, Manca, & Matranga, 1999). While school boards continue to support local districts with financial oversight, local school boards are expected to secure adequate resources to support academic achievement (Land, 2002; NSBA, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Essentially, school boards work collaboratively with district personnel to make sound financial decisions regarding effective policies and programs (Land, 2002; R. M. Williams, 1998).

According to the Devarics and O’Brien (2011), school boards governing in high-achieving districts are more likely to participate in goal setting and progress monitoring. School board members face scrutiny if they fail to implement policies and programs designed to accelerate academic achievement (Carol et al., 1986; Land, 2002; Resnick, 1999; Speer, 1998). In fact, Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a meta-analysis by examining findings from 27 studies conducted since 1970 and found a statistically significant relationship between collaborative goal setting with district leadership,

including school board members and student achievement. In school districts with higher achievement levels, the local school board of education is aligned with and supportive of the nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction and ensures that the goals remain the top priority in the district.

Role of the Superintendent

Historical Perspective

The first paying position of the superintendent of schools originated in 1839 in Buffalo, New York; this job description was to support school administrators and teachers and to manage newly forming school districts due to population growth (Harmeier, 2016). Major metropolitan cities including Louisville, Kentucky; Providence, Road Island; and St. Louis, Missouri followed suit and hired superintendents to alleviate the workload from local school board members and to provide expertise to the tasks being delegated (R. F. Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990; G. T. Jackson, 2013). Early superintendents primarily focused on instructional leadership (G. T. Jackson, 2013) by supervising classroom instruction to encourage curriculum alignment (Harmeier, 2016).

Between 1910 and 1940, the school superintendency mirrored the economic and cultural shift taking place in the United States. The transition from rural farming communities to industrialized societies (Glass, 1992; Harmeier, 2016; G. T. Jackson, 2013) prompted school board members to recruit business-minded superintendents to fulfill the administrative functions of the organization. Twentieth-century superintendents were expected to be skilled in business, particularly school finance, and school organization (G. T. Jackson, 2013).

The school superintendency experienced the third iteration between 1930 and 1940. Superintendents were granted statesmanship to protect the position from political opposition, advocate for resources, and generate support for education (Kowalski, 2005b). Public education continued to expand in complexity and required a deeper level of sophistication to engage in policy making (Cox, n.d.; Harmeier, 2016).

At the end of World War II, demographic shifts in school-aged children contributed to philosophical shifts with the superintendency. Superintendents were encouraged to transition from a political framework to supporting social science (Harmeier, 2016). Communication became of great importance, and superintendents were tasked with communicating with the following four functions: informing, instructing, evaluating, and influencing (Harmeier, 2016). By the 1980s, researchers opposed the top-down communication model implemented 2 decades prior and advocated for a more collaborative communication model (Harmeier, 2016; Kowalski, 2005a).

The superintendent position evolved to meet the societal demands of shifting labor markets, federal and state government mandates, and rigorous student performance accountability measures (Harmeier, 2016; L. A. Jackson, 2016). Superintendents must now possess diverse leadership skills to successfully navigate through the scope of responsibilities to ensure the school district meets the demands of the 21st century and the expectations of the school board (L. A. Jackson, 2016). CSBA established the following standards for superintendents:

- Promotes the success of all students and supports the efforts of the Board of Trustees to keep the district focused on learning and achievement.
- Values, advocates and supports public education and all stake holders.

- Recognizes and respects the differences of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents and the community—and ensures that the diverse range of views inform board decisions.
- Acts with dignity, treats everyone with civility and respect, and understands the implications of demeanor and behavior.
- Serves as a model for the value of lifelong learning and supports the Board’s continuous professional development.
- Works with the Board as a “governance team” and assures collective responsibility for building a unity of purpose, communicating a common vision and creating a positive organizational culture.
- Recognizes that the board/superintendent governance relationship is supported by the management team in each district.
- Understands the distinctions between board and staff roles, and respects the role of the Board as the representative of the community.
- Understands that authority rests with the Board as a whole; provides guidance to the Board to assist in decision-making; and provides leadership based on the direction of the Board as a whole.
- Communicates openly with trust and integrity including providing all members of the Board with equal access to information, and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications.
- Accepts leadership responsibility and accountability for implementing the vision, goals and policies of the district. (CSBA, n.d.-a, para. 2)

Superintendents must have the communication skills to share pertinent information with their constituents, the expertise and the wherewithal to navigate educational leadership, the strength to implement managerial leadership, and the savviness and charisma to navigate political leadership (Meador, 2017; Mora, 2005; Weiss et al., 2015).

Political Leadership

Superintendents are legally tasked with developing policy collaboratively with the school board and implementing the policy within the organization (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Superintendents are also expected to maintain political attributes conducive to building coalitions in support of school improvement and establish financial partnerships to supplement state and federal funding (Culotta, 2008; L. A. Jackson, 2016). Glass (2010) believed that useful communication skills are needed to establish and maintain such relationships with stakeholders.

An essential role of the superintendent is as a communicator (Kowalski, 2005a). Moving from an authoritative, top-down communication approach (Harmeier, 2016; Kowalski, 2005a), school superintendents are now expected to utilize collaborative communication protocols when interacting with stakeholders. CSBA (n.d.-a) encourages superintendents to “communicate openly with trust and integrity including providing all members of the Board with equal access to information, and recognizing the importance of both responsive and anticipatory communications” (para. 2).

CSBA (n.d.-a) believes that the primary responsibility of a superintendent is to advise the school board on essential information regarding the district. In addition to advising the school board, superintendents are also accountable for building and

maintaining public support for the organization. When describing the role of the superintendent, W. C. Wood (2015) stated, “He must be an evangelist of education, thoroughly believing in his mission and able to show his fellow citizens the value and needs of the great institution of which he is the chief officer” (p. 5).

The public relations component of the job bears the responsibility of keeping the school public and popular (W. C. Wood, 2015). School superintendents are expected to consistently engage in open and honest dialogue that is fair and reciprocated by the constituency (Kowalski, 1999, 2005). Engaging stakeholders requires a deep understanding of the industrial, sociological, and economic needs of the region; developing relationships with the local media and community services organizations to share the business of the organization and participate in community building efforts (W. C. Wood, 2015). Developing relationships with stakeholders set the foundation for the school and informing the public regarding plans, sharing district guidelines and processes, and sharing outcomes.

Superintendents are expected to solicit and receive input, and consider criticisms and suggestions (W. C. Wood, 2015). With stakeholders representing various social and political interests, a skilled superintendent is also expected to engage in the art of persuasion to alleviate misconceptions and modify attitudes to persuade the public to support the initiative or the organization. Lastly, the superintendent is tasked with incorporating the ideations, actions, and attitudes of the school organization with those of the community to ensure the values of the community and the organizations are aligned (Waters & Marzano, 2006). *The Professional Standards for the Superintendency*

included the following three standards dedicated to the political aspects of the superintendency:

- Standard 1—Strategic leadership and district culture
- Standard 3—Communications and community relations
- Standard 8—Values and ethics of leadership. (Hoyle et al., 1993, pp. 6-11)

Educational Leadership

Social, political, and economic trends taking place in the country contributed to the evolving and increasing demands on the superintendency (L. A. Jackson, 2016; Peterson & Barnett, 2005). Some theorists debate the most effective use of the superintendent, including advocacy for a managerial style of leadership, and others believe instructional leadership is paramount (L. A. Jackson, 2016). Hanks (2010) believed that the role of the superintendent should mirror the expectations of the earliest superintendent, which focused on leading curriculum and instruction, leading the daily operations, and serving as secretaries to the school board.

Instructional leadership has resurged as a desirable response to school reform mandates from the federal and state governments (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Bredeson & Kose, 2007) and the Common Core State Standards has contributed to the importance of superintendents serving as instructional leaders (L. A. Jackson, 2016). Superintendents are expected to establish conditions that foster improved curricular, instructional, and assessment practices toward improved student learning and outcomes (Bredeson & Kose, 2007; Rallis, Tedder, Lachman, & Elmore, 2006). Specifically, superintendents must vigorously design and evaluate instructional programs within the organization, develop

and implement professional learning programs with the educators within the organization, and monitor progress toward student achievement (L. A. Jackson, 2016).

Fullan (2001) suggested that the role of the superintendent as an instructional leader plays out as the superintendent's responsibility to develop the school principals as instructional leaders, saying this is the key to the success of the superintendent.

Similarly, Rueter (2009) argued that the superintendent is expected to be the primary instructional leader in the school district, able to develop a districtwide vision for student success at all levels of the organization. In fact, Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a meta-analysis by examining findings from 27 studies conducted since 1970 and found a statistically significant relationship between collaborative goal setting with district leadership, including school board members and student achievement. In school districts with higher achievement levels, the local board of education is aligned with and supportive of the nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction and ensures that the goals remain the top priority in the district (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The Professional Standards for the Superintendency included the following two standards dedicated to the instructional leadership components of the position:

- Standard 5—Curriculum planning and development
- Standard 6—Instructional management. (Hoyle et al., 1993, pp. 6-11)

Managerial Role

Cuban (1998) acknowledged both the importance and the components of instructional leadership. He also indicated that superintendents must embrace the management and leadership aspects of essential responsibilities even in the face of opposition (Cuban, 1998). Cuban defined managing as maintaining stability while the

organization progresses toward goals, and he defined leading as exploring changes, taking risks, and accepting conflict as a condition of change. Considering the state of current school administration, John Kotter, Harvard Business School Professor, agreed with Cuban when he emphasized the importance of superintendents finding a balance between serving as both effective leaders and competent managers (Kowalski, 2005).

L. A. Jackson's (2016) reflection on the early stages of school superintendency revealed that superintendents were hired with limited positional power and they carried out the business affairs under the direction of the school board. Mostly, the school superintendent relieved the school board of difficult managerial and business tasks. The managerial tasks included coordinating programs, aligning instructional practices among teachers, managing business practices, maintaining financial records, and developing purchasing processes among the schools; and therefore, the superintendent was theoretically a secretary to the board of education (Glass, 2010).

Almost two centuries removed, the position of the modern superintendent has been identified as one of the most complex jobs in public administration (Harmeier, 2016). The managerial duties alone require sophisticated technical skills to balance the needs of the various groups they serve, including the board of education (Harmeier, 2016). Freeley and Seinfeld (2012) believed that superintendents have a monumental task of serving as a nurturing leader with employees and holding employees within the organization accountable when needed.

Harmeier (2016) noted that, as chief executive officers, superintendents must possess the executive skills to meet the complex demands of budgets, personnel,

information technology, accountability, and competition while maintaining a balanced budget and human capital and providing parent involvement programs.

The Professional Standards for the Superintendency included the following three standards dedicated to managerial components of the position:

- Standard 2—Understanding public school governance
- Standard 4—Leadership and organizational management and school
- Standard 7—Staff evaluation and personnel management. (Hoyle et al., 1993, pp. 6-11)

Urban Superintendents

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, n.d.-b) established a framework and categorized school districts based on the U.S. Census Bureau's definition of urban and rural areas. The NCES identified the following four types of school districts: city, urban, suburban, and rural (NCES, n.d.-b). The characterization stems from population counts, residential population density, and nonresidential urban land use. Urban school districts are located within a territory inside an urbanized area and principal city; suburban school districts are located within a territory outside of a principal city; and rural districts are classified as fringe, distant, or remote based on the distance from an urbanized area (NCES, n.d.-b). While suburban and rural school superintendents experience unique challenges relative to their respective demographics, urban superintendents face scrutiny on an uneven playing field. Despite the challenges, constituents blame urban superintendents for low student performance particularly in poor and minority neighborhoods (Fuller et al., 2003).

Obstacles Faced

Research suggests that superintendents, regardless of the school demographics, should lead by utilizing political, educational, and managerial leadership skills. The modern urban superintendent's experience differs from his or her suburban and rural counterparts as he or she is tasked with leading organizations (Gibbins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) in increasingly complex environments. The responsibilities and expectations have become more numerous and demanding over time (Fuller et al., 2003; Gibbins, 2008; Glass et al., 2000).

Historically, the NCES collected and reported data highlighting the socioeconomic disparity between urban and nonurban schools. In 2001, 23% of the 47 million students enrolled in the nation's public schools attended 100 of the largest school districts, predominately located in urban areas. The 100 districts identified served 40% of the 18.5 million minority students and 30% of the 20 million students living in poverty in the United States (NCES, 2001). Thirteen years later, the statistics illustrated consistent socioeconomic disproportionality between urban districts and suburban and rural districts. In fact, during the 2014-2015 school year, the NCES reported that 41% of high-poverty students attended schools within urban areas, while only 18% resided in suburban areas, and 14% resided in rural areas.

The high concentration of students with low socioeconomic status creates additional challenges for urban superintendents. According to Gibbins (2008), schools located within low socioeconomic (SES) urban districts have failed disproportionately to educate poor children, predominately from African American and Latino backgrounds. In fact, Jencks and Phillips (1998) believed that the racial achievement gap between

African Americans and Latinos and their White counterparts presents one of the most significant challenges to achieving social equality in the United States. Schools that serve a statistically significant percentage of students living in poverty, and of African American and Latino decent record low student achievement results, poor attendance rates, and significantly higher dropout rates; are exposed to or involved in violence; and have high student mobility rate, inequitable standards, and a shortage of qualified teachers (Gibbins, 2008).

Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga (2009) added that children from low-SES households and communities grapple with societal implications of living in impoverished neighborhoods. Physical and psychological health concerns associated with low SES negatively impact academic achievement (Morgan et al., 2009). In 2013, Reardon, Valentino, Kalogrides, Shores, and Greenberg found that the literacy skills of children from low-SES families were on average 5 years behind students representing high-income families. With the sheer number of children requiring support in urban schools, the school systems are often not equipped to address the individual needs of children, thus perpetuating minimal academic progress and outcomes (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008).

Superville's (2015) *Education Week* article titled "Study Lays Out Grim Statistics on Urban Education," summarized DeArmond et al.'s (2015) study of 50 urban schools in the United States and highlighted several areas of concern:

- Less than a third of the cities examined made gains in math or reading proficiency over the three-year study span relative to their state's performance.

- One in 4 students in the 9th grade in 2009 did not graduate from high school in four years.
- Forty percent of schools across the cities that were in the bottom 5 percent in their state stayed there for three years.
- Less than 10 percent of all high school students enrolled in advanced-math classes each year in 29 of the 50 cities. . . .
- About a 14 percentage-point achievement gap existed between students who were eligible for free and reduced-price meals and those who were not.
- Black students were almost twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as white students. (p. 5)

The minimal academic progress outcomes for students of color and students from low SES households and neighborhoods have generated social and political concerns around student learning. Federal and state mandates, such as No Child Left Behind and the Common Core State Standards, legislatively placed accountability measures and intensified the focus on student learning outcomes (Gibbings, 2008; Lashway, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The era of high-stakes accountability has placed a tremendous amount of political pressure on school superintendents, particularly urban superintendents, to lead and improve student achievement outcomes within their respective organizations (Kowalski, 2006). The strict legislation and the increasing public discontent with the low performance of urban public schools have also intensified the pressure on urban superintendents to transform their organizations (Kowalski, 2006).

Gibbings (2008) believed that urban school superintendents must understand and implement various educational leadership strategies to transform their organization.

Kowalski (2006) reported that scholars learned that when urban superintendents employ instructional leadership methods, serve as transformational leaders, and use managerial levers at their disposal to support learning and teaching, they can indirectly improve instruction (Bjork, 1993; Peterson & Barnett, 2005). While a body of research outlined the blueprint for urban student achievement success, the successful implementation of practices presents difficulties.

The political leadership role conceptualizes and characterizes the work of the urban superintendent (Bredeson, 1996). Glass et al. (2000) reported that the political influence of interest groups remained prevalent with 90% of superintendents who served school districts larger than 25,000 students. Glass et al. also indicated that 83% of the superintendents responded that the micropolitical relationship between the school board and superintendent was a serious problem. In 2003, Fuller et al. surveyed urban superintendents from the largest urban school districts in the nation and found that the political demand of the position interfered with the commitment and practices of improving teaching and learning. Also, urban superintendents did not believe they were afforded enough authority to accomplish their mission; the employment demands of the school district took precedence over the instructional needs; and the competing demands of the school board, teachers' union, and central office compromised the ownership of their agenda (Fuller et al., 2003).

The commonly used proverb, "this too shall pass" reflects the frequent turnover rate of superintendents particularly in urban districts. Although Marzano and Waters (2009) correlated employment longevity of the school superintendent to positive academic achievement outcomes, the average tenure for school superintendents within

the United States is relatively short. Renchlar (1992) reported an average tenure of 2.5 years for urban superintendents compared to a national average of 5.6 years for all superintendents. Twenty-six years later in 2018, The Broad Center surveyed superintendents and found that the average tenure for school superintendents in the 100 largest school districts in the United States was 6.16 years. The study also found that the average time current superintendents had been on the job was 3.76 years. Urban school districts recorded shorter tenures, as the average time spent in the role was about 5.5 years, and among current superintendents, the average leader of a large urban school district was between 3 and 4 years.

The report from The Broad Center (2018) suggested that when disaggregating the data, student demographics play a critical role in the longevity of the superintendency. Specifically, SES, race, and ethnicity contributed to the high turnover rates of urban superintendents (The Broad Center, 2018). The superintendent's tenure also decreased when the percentage of students with low SES increased (The Broad Center, 2018). . Furthermore, the superintendent's tenure decreased when the percentage of students of color increased (The Broad Center, 2018). The figures are presented in Table 1.

Implications of Superintendent Turnover

The revolving door of superintendents has severe implications for the organization, particularly within urban school districts. The revolving door of leaders fosters distrust of the position of the superintendent and with education in general (Natkin et al., 2002). This constant turnover also disrupts the leadership, creating resistance among teachers and suppressing reform initiatives that are designed to foster systemic

Table 1

Superintendents Based on Percentage of SES and Students of Color 2018

Percentage of students with low SES	Superintendent tenure (years)
0-25%	8.59
26-50%	6.23
51-75%	5.77
76-100%	5.13
Percentage of students of color	Superintendent tenure (years)
0-25%	8.59
26-50%	6.23
51-75%	5.77
76-100%	5.13

Note. Adapted from *Hire Expectations: Big-District Superintendents Stay in Their Jobs Longer Than We Think*, by The Broad Center, 2018 (https://www.broadcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TheBroadCenter_HireExpectations_May2018.pdf).

change (Ament, 2013). In 2007, Glass and Franceschini found that superintendents with anticipated short tenures were more likely to address surface-level objectives that could easily be accomplished within a relatively short time frame versus engaging the organization in deep-level educational reform work. The study also found that superintendent turnover negatively impacted the mindset creating obstacles for employee buy-in of the improvement initiatives. Instead, constituents waited for the next new superintendent to come onboard. Glass and Franceschini (2007) stated, “The three-year cycle of dismissal, search, and selection, reorganization and dismissal again was the greatest single hindrance to improving the quality of our schools” (p. 29). They went on to propose that for change to be successful in all facets of education, stable and

predictable leadership needs to be in place over a sustained period (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

School Board and Superintendent Relationships

Importance of relationship. The research acquired thus far identifies the relationship between the superintendent and the school board members as the conduit to organizational success. Superintendents and school board members must develop strong working relationships within the organization. In fact, J. R. Thompson (2014) believed that quality governance between the superintendent and the school board stems from trusting and collaborative relationships.

The relationship between the school board and superintendent can affect the level of satisfaction with, and the performance of, the entire school district (Gore, 2016). Alsbury and Gore (2015), Delagardelle (2015), and Shober and Hartney (2014) suggested that the manner in which school board members interact with each other and with the superintendent may correlate with the outcomes of public school students. Waters and Marzano's (2006) study confirmed the importance of leadership stability by finding positive correlations between the duration of superintendent service and student achievement.

R. Thompson and Holt (2016) stated, "The relationship of the school board and the school superintendent are dependent upon each other for accountability and inevitable change" (p. 2). It remains imperative for the school board and the school superintendent to understand and establish trusting relationships to ensure leadership continuity and provide system reform that supports achievement goals (Hanover Research, 2014). Trust

and components of trust are the basis of a positive relationship (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016).

Establishing a positive professional and working relationship remains critical to school reform efforts, particularly in urban settings (Mora, 2005). Schools located in urban settings face challenges, which mirror those consistent with high-poverty communities (Mirel, 1993). This research remains crucial because approximately 40% of the students who attend schools in large cities exit the program without the credentials, the skills, or the knowledge necessary for productive employment (Farrington, 2014).

Relationship in decline. Research indicates that the school board and superintendent relationships have tension (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998; Tallerico, 1989) and are steadily declining (Alsbury, 2008). High-stakes assessments and accountability measures are two of many factors intensifying the conflict and straining the relationship (Moody, 2011; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2001). Petersen and Fusarelli (2001) also believed that increased accountability measures contribute to the stress in the relationship but added future political aspirations by school board members as another factor causing interference. Lastly, social influences and the compulsion for school board members to micromanage the administrative functions of the superintendent lead to animosity and further strains on the relationship (Renchlar, 1992).

Bowers (2016) stated, “In this uncertain political environment, it is more critical than ever to a school board’s and superintendent’s effectiveness to develop a collaborative, trusting, relationship; yet the conditions are not conducive, and the odds are not favorable” (p. 7). School board members represent the political interests of their constituencies (Bowers, 2016). As elected officials, school board members strive to meet

the political expectations of the voters to earn reelection (Gore, 2016). Specifically, school board members ensure that the values and beliefs of the organization are representative of the community. Gore (2016) stated, “The relationship between a board and a superintendent is where the will of the public meets the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of hired professionals” (p. 2). According to the CSBA (2017), school board members also work collaboratively with the superintendent to establish board priorities and goals designed to support students, the school district, and the school sites. In addition, school board members establish and implement accountability measures to monitor the progress of the superintendent and the daily operations of the district (CSBA, 2017).

Various political agendas create a certain degree of conflict within the school board and with the superintendent (Gore, 2016). School board members both serve and consider input from multiple public and constituent groups. They represent the political interests of their constituencies (Bowers, 2016), and as elected officials, school board members strive to meet the political expectations of the voters to earn reelection (Gore, 2016).

Plecki (2006) stated, “School board members tend to have difficulty working together and with the superintendent as an effective governance team” (p. 27). Carol et al. (1986) shared similar thoughts regarding relationship challenges between the school boards and superintendents. The challenges intensify when employment turnover occurs and when debating educational reform practices. The disconnect between community expectations, school board expectations, and school district achievement expectations are inconsistent, particularly in urban districts (Mora, 2005).

Performance evaluations are designed to serve as a vehicle for sharing updates, discussions, and expectations. The school board's limited knowledge or experience with public education, relationship conflicts, and the scope and breadth of a superintendent's duties make it difficult to accurately and objectively assess performance, thus contributing to the relationship difficulties between the two groups (Gore, 2016).

Implications of mistrust. The instability, and the high and rapid turnover rate at the superintendent position in recent decades arguably contributes to the lack of improvement in K-12 public education (Byrd et al., 2006; DeKoninck, 2009; Glass et al., 2000). Research shows a positive correlation between the employment longevity of both the superintendent and school board members and increased student achievement (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016).

The reciprocal relationship requires superintendents and school board members to trust and rely on each other for guidance, policy development, and policy implementation, thus promoting quality governance and organizational growth opportunities (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016). Research suggests that the relationship between the superintendent and the school board conflicts as superintendents tend to have difficulty working with school boards (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). R. Thompson and Holt, in their 2016 study, found a 60% difference in the perception of the school board president and the superintendent in their trust relationship. They believed that inconsistent actions by board members create a degree of uncertainty and trust in the working relationship (R. Thompson & Holt, 2016).

According to Bowers (2016), a highly charged political climate, which contrasts with the actions of the superintendent potentially strains the relationship between

superintendents and school board members. Maxwell (2013) cited results from a Gallup/Education Week survey, which suggested that the majority of superintendents in the United States do not offer strong approval ratings of school boards' ability to govern districts. Furthermore, just 2% of superintendents reported that they strongly agreed on their school boards' ability to govern the organization effectively.

The external factors, including political, social, economic, and environmental, present significant challenges. These factors impact and create internal challenges within the organization, thus compromising consistency at the superintendent level. When school boards resist or are reluctant to support education reforms the superintendent wants to accomplish is one example of a factor impacting the relationship. As a result, there is likely to be turnover in the superintendent's position (Danzberger et al., 1992). Rausch (2001) correlated superintendent and school board conflict with superintendents either resigning or being terminated from their post. Bowers (2016) suggested that superintendents are required to accomplish the priorities and promises that the school board made to their constituencies. Negligence could lead to a less-than-satisfactory evaluation from their school boards or they could eventual termination.

Developing relationships is an essential characteristic that both superintendents and school board members to prolong the tenures of their respective positions (L. A. Jackson, 2016). Glass (1992) found that the most significant challenge faced by superintendents is short employment tenures. The turnover at the superintendent position is continuously in flux. Between 2005 and 2015, Chicago experienced five superintendent changes; Los Angeles, Boston, and Oakland each had three. The 4-year

average tenure of a school superintendent in California is attributed to relationship concerns or lack of whole-hearted community support (W. C. Wood, 2015).

Relationships Among School Board Members

Importance of the Relationship

Grissom (2012) defined governing boards as small workgroups tasked with identifying appropriate policies and strategies. The school board's effectiveness is of great importance as they govern the policy decisions for all children attending public school in the United States (Hess, 2002). According to Forbes and Milliken (1999), "The effectiveness of boards is likely to depend heavily on social-psychological processes, particularly those of group participation and interaction, the exchange of information, and critical discussion" (p. 492).

Ford and Ihrke (2016) believed that a relationship built on openness and trust is essential to the group dynamics. Although the development of an effective school board that fosters trust requires a substantial amount of time and a concerted effort (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975), the investment is vital to the success of the organization. Golembiewski and McConkie (1975) found that school board members who built relationships on trust and openness, and who exercised relationship civility with fellow school board members, were higher performing. Also, researchers have found that high-functioning school boards develop strong relationships with the executives, operate with a high degree of openness, view themselves as active and productive, and do not allow politics to impede progress (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Gabris, Golembiewski, & Ihrke, 2001; Gabris & Nelson, 2013; Nelson & Nollenberger, 2011).

Conversely, a board that is unable to develop productive relationships by reaching a level of trust and openness may not enhance the governance behaviors to positively impact organizational performance (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Gabris & Nelson, 2013; Nelson & Nollenberger, 2011). Grissom (2010) indicated that conflict among board members generates anxiety and frustration and can draw management into board disagreements. The conflict experienced causes political turmoil, which both undermines social relationships and generates mistrust (Grissom, 2012; Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003).

Implications of Poor Relationships

Intragroup conflict disrupts the information processing and strategic decision-making process, thus leading to less effective policy outputs (Forbes & Milliken, 1999; Grissom, 2012). Specifically, when conflicts among school board members exist the potential for poor school board decisions and decreased board effectiveness increases. Case studies of school boards in nine school districts showed that interpersonal differences and an inability to work as a team impeded effective governance (Carol et al., 1986; Grissom, 2012).

Grissom (2012) indicated that high-conflict school boards might make poor policy decisions for the organization, which has consequences for its results. Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman (1997) shared similar views as they found that school districts with negative relationships, poor communication, and a lack of trust among the governance team also had lower student achievement outcomes. Gabris, Grenell, Ihrke, and Kaatz (2000) focused on the social comfortability as they found that school board conflict correlated with poor communication between boards and staff members and with staff discomfort and distrust of the school board. Poor relations with management and

other staff may reduce the human or social capital resources from which the school board can draw when faced with challenges (Gabris et al., 2000).

Hiring the superintendent is the most critical task performed by a school board (Ford & Ihrke, 2016), and the relationship between the school board and the superintendent is paramount to linking school board governance with organizational performance (Ford & Ihrke, 2016; Smoley, 1999). When the school board and the superintendent agree on the governance teams' view on accountability, a healthy group dynamic is expected (Ford & Ihrke, 2016). School boards that view their superintendent as a partner are more likely to have clear governance objectives and a common perception of the group's view on accountability (Leverett, n.d.).

Michael Ford, an assistant professor of public administration at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, surveyed more than 5,000 school board members on small group dynamics of school boards (Ford & Ihrke, 2017). He found that school board members who demonstrated a healthy relationship with the district administrator by considering their superintendent as a partner in the governing process exhibited significantly lower levels of conflict than those who did not. Ford and Ihrke also found that more experienced school board members tend to perceive lower levels of conflict, suggesting that experienced school board members improve at keeping board disagreements professional over time. Lastly, school boards with a clearly defined leader exhibit better group dynamics and boards that effectively delegate the day-to-day operations management of the school district to the superintendent have far lower levels of conflict than those with a tendency to micromanage (Ford & Ihrke, 2017).

Wall and Callister (1995) defined conflict as a pattern of feelings, actions, and reactions that result when “one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (p. 517). The continuous interactions create the potential for additional conflict among team members. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) defined conflict within the team setting as a “process resulting from tension between team members because of real or perceived differences” (p. 741).

Research suggests that intragroup conflict may have implications for either positive or negative school board effectiveness (De Dreu & West 2001; Grissom, 2012; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale 1999). While Amason (1996) indicated that conflict could potentially interfere with the school board’s performance by creating animosity and anxiety, Jehn (1995) believed that conflict is an opportunity to question assumptions, scrutinize issues, and work at creative thinking to improve outcomes. Carol et al.’s (1986) views aligned with those of Amason (1996) and cited school board factionalism and an inability to manage differences among members as hindrances to board effectiveness. Also, Goodman et al. (1997) shared that poor interpersonal relations between school board members and with the superintendent are signs of poor governance.

While Amason (1996) and Jehn (1995) found different implications for conflict, Grissom (2010, 2012) used a body of work to hypothesize that school board conflict will negatively impact the school board’s ability to make sound decisions and provide oversight to the organization, the school board’s working relationship with the superintendent, and the organizational outcomes. Grissom (2012) shared similar beliefs as he hypothesized that if intragroup conflict negatively impacts proximal board

outcomes, such as the quality of board policy decisions and the relationship between the school board and superintendent, conflict may indirectly impact organizational performance. Finally, Goodman et al. (1997) found negative connotations between poor relationships and outcomes. In fact, the trio found that the school districts with negative relationships, poor communication, and a lack of trust among governance team members also had lower student achievement outcomes (Goodman et al., 1997).

There are various reasons attributed to intragroup conflict. Greene (1992) indicated that school boards often operate from a political/self-interest rather than a community/public-good model. Instead of relying on the governance structure for school community decisions, school board members respond to the demands of the broader community (Greene, 1992; Opfer & Denmark, 2001). Zeigler (1975) focused on the inconsistent behavior of school board members. In fact, Zeigler believed that “school board members behave like typical schizophrenics. On the one hand, they willingly (indeed eagerly) give power away to the experts. . . . on the other hand they espouse an ideology of lay control” (p. 8). Specifically, the school board acts simultaneously as a professional organization, relying on the expertise of the superintendent and professional experts, and responding to their constituents including parent and community complaints (Greene, 1992).

Best Practice Suggestions for Consideration

Procedural alignment is key to good relationships within a school board team. Ford and Ihrke (2015) believed that it is essential for school board members who serve together to carry an understanding of the objective even if that objective contradicts the universal agreements in the field of K-12 education (Ford & Ihrke, 2015). Also, the

governing board is directly responsible for holding the organization accountable; therefore, the governing board needs to have a consistent understanding of the term *accountability* within public governance. Ford and Ihrke (2016) believed that school board members who perceive small favorable dynamics on the school board including a high level of productivity, a low level of conflict, and proactive policy making are more likely to perceive the existence of a shared accountability definition.

Ford and Ihrke (2016) offered best practice strategies to reduce conflict and improve productivity to encourage a clear focus on accountability. Strategies include regularly scheduled strategic planning exercises, placing parameters on board deliberations, requiring that district-specific policies be created in critical functional areas, and incorporating accountability into the organization's mission statement.

Summary

The global trust crisis crippling other institutions is mirrored in public education. A body of research and literature unwaveringly supports the importance of trust and cautions the impact of mistrust within organizations (Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Delagardelle, 2015; Shober & Hartney, 2014; J. R. Thompson, 2014). Trust is crucial to the success of public school districts, thus members of the governance team must establish a level of trust among themselves to establish coherence toward a shared vision (CSBA, 2017). Also, governance team members must operate in unison to manage the operational challenges within the organization and to address the political aspects that surface. As the roles and expectations continue to increase in complexity, relationship challenges stemming from mistrust become more prevalent (Bowers, 2016).

With increased accountability measures and the immense pressure to meet both state and federal mandates, the literature encourages strong intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships to minimize the miscommunication, misalignment, and mistrust (Ament, 2013; Bowers, 2016; Ford & Ihrke, 2015; Gore, 2016; R. Thompson & Holt, 2016). Also, the literature supported that successful outcomes within school districts heavily depends on the level of trust established and practiced among school board members and superintendents (Ament, 2013; Gore, 2016).

The present study employed a mixed-methods study methodology to identify and describe what leadership strategies superintendents use to build trust with and between school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The quantitative portion of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study secured data from exemplary urban superintendents through a survey instrument specifically designed for this study. The qualitative portion of this study enabled the participating superintendents to emphasize and highlight the strategies they perceive as most important to build trust with and between school board members. The methodology chapter shares the purpose statement, lists the research questions, and describes the rationale for the research design selected. The population and sample, instrumentation, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures are described and outlined as well. Finally, the methodology chapter concludes with the limitations and the summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust between school board members.

Research Questions

1. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through competence?
2. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through consistency?

3. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through concern?
4. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through candor?
5. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through connection?

Research Design

While quantitative and qualitative research methods differ significantly, they also share similarities. The variables within both methods control strategies, are impacted by the researcher, and can be used to study the same phenomenon (Yilmaz, 2013).

Quantitative and qualitative research designs share very distinct differences as well.

Quantitative research gathers information that focuses on summarizing characteristics across large groups or relationships, and qualitative research collects information that describes a phenomenon in an in-depth, comprehensive manner (Yilmaz, 2013).

Researchers have an opportunity to combine both quantitative and qualitative research in mixed-methods research design to address limitations and report more in-depth results.

The mixed-methods approach provides an opportunity to establish the *what* through statistical significance and illustrate the *why* through explanatory storytelling (Roberts, 2010). The mixed-methods approach also enables the researcher to collect richer data, thus adding both depth and complexity to the study (Roberts, 2010) and fostering a deeper level of understanding of the subject matter (Creswell, 2005). Seminal researchers such as McMillan and Schumacher (2010), and Creswell (2005; Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2010) concurred that by using both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher may obtain a coherent, more accurate depiction of the topic of study.

As part of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the researcher first used both a quantitative research method, or analyzing numerical data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), then explained the statistical data through a qualitative research method or description and discussion of words, trends, and themes (Patton, 2015; see Figure 2). Specifically, the researcher used quantitative and qualitative methods to describe and identify how superintendents working within urban school districts built trust with and between school board members using Weisman (2016) five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was part of a thematic process, which included four independent researchers, each addressing the same methodology but focusing on superintendents representing different geographic school district populations, including suburban, rural, ROCP, and urban.



Figure 2. Explanatory sequential design. *Note.* From *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.), by M. Q. Patton, 2015. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Quantitative Research Design

Quantitative studies are intended to measure and describe a phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) through a design that exercises a level of neutrality or objectivity through the use of statistical measurements and statistical analysis to support or challenge the hypothesis (S. Campbell, 2014; Creswell, 2003). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) believed that it is appropriate for the researcher to select a quantitative method when the researcher wants to examine overall patterns in relationships between independent and dependent variables. Quantitative studies can be advantageous and convenient for researchers because the strategies, typically surveys or questionnaires, are conducive to administer to larger populations simultaneously in a relatively short period of time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The researcher conducted the quantitative portion of this research project through a survey of exemplary urban superintendents who built trusting relationships with and between school board members. The quantitative approach allowed the researcher to determine the degree to which superintendents perceived competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection were used to establish trust with and between school board members. The electronic survey tool, SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>), was used to collect the quantitative data for this study. The quantitative survey included 30 closed-ended questions with Likert scale response options ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The survey design aimed to acquire an understanding of how superintendents built trust with and between school board members using Weisman's (2016) five domains of trust.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative studies intend to collect data through open-ended inquiries that the researcher transcribes and converts into themes. The identified characteristics of qualitative research include conducting the study in the natural setting, using multiple methods that are considered interactive and humanistic, and collecting emerging data instead of prefigured data (Patton, 2015). Qualitative data used in an exploratory nature may suggest a data deficiency regarding the participants or the topic of study. An exploratory method is often described as detective work. The researcher uses the data for exploration and discovery of ideas, insights, and clarification (Wrenn, Stevens, & Loudon, 2007). Qualitative data may also be used to gather explanatory data designed to examine the reasons for or identify the association between the existence two variables (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The researcher conducted the qualitative portion of this research project through interviews with exemplary urban superintendents who built trusting relationships with and between school board members. The researcher utilized an explanatory strategy to give the exemplary urban superintendents an opportunity to share their lived experiences through rich and illustrative stories. The explanatory strategy also supported and provided deeper meaning and understanding to the survey responses. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explain the *how* and the *why* urban superintendents perceived competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection as a means to establish trust with and between school board members.

Mixed-Methods Research Design

Creswell (2005) stated, “Mixed methods research is a good design to use if you seek to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 510). Mixed methods combines both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Patton (2015) indicated that explanatory mixed-methods research design is a form of inquiry that requires the researcher to gather the quantitative data first to identify the neutral, objective numerical statistics. The strategy then requires the researcher to collect qualitative data in an attempt to explain the quantitative findings. Patton also discussed exploratory design, which initially identifies a small sample of qualitative inquiry, to identify themes that later inform a larger quantitative design. Patton described a third type of mixed-methods design, triangulation where the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously.

Method Rationale

The four peer researchers collaboratively selected the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design that focused on studying how superintendents built trust with and between school board members using Weisman’s (2016) five domains of trust: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The four researchers studied superintendents across four separate school district classifications including urban, suburban, rural, and ROCP. The researchers all used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods methodology, which enabled them to acquire the breadth and depth of the school districts studied through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each of the four researchers surveyed at least 15 superintendents and interviewed five superintendents within their identified demographic and geographic population.

This researcher aimed to identify and describe what leadership strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important when building trust with and between school board members using Weisman’s (2016) five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The literature supported how superintendents use at least one of the five variables independently, but little data support the five variables used collectively. There is a gap in the research that fails to address how the five variables— competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection— used together, can build trust with and between the exemplary urban superintendents and school board members.

Population

A population is defined as “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Creswell (2005) explained that a population consists of the individuals who possess unique traits or characteristics that differentiate them from others. This study focused on the public school superintendents and the means by which they established trust with and between their school board. The California Department of Education (CDE, 2017) identified 1,026 superintendents working within the CDE system. Because of time, geographic, and monetary constraints, the researcher did not find it feasible to study the entire population size of superintendents within the CDE. The researcher identified a manageable target population to study.

Target Population

Creswell (2014) defined a target population as the “actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected” (p. 393). Specifically, the target population for a

study includes the entire group of individuals selected from the overall population for which the study data will be used to make inferences. Also, a target population for a study is often delimited to address the various constraints, such as time, money, and geography (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers placed great importance on clearly identifying the target population in research studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) because the target population represents the generalized findings from the study. The target population for this study included 149 superintendents working in urban school districts in California (NCES, n.d.-a; ProximityOne, 2018).

Sample

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified a sample as a group of subjects representing a specific population from whom the researcher collects data. Creswell (2005) explained that the researcher selects the sample for purposes of making generalizations about the target population. The sample for this research study included 16 exemplary school superintendents who work in California. While a mixed-methods design lends itself to various probability and nonprobability sampling strategies, nonprobability purposeful sampling, sampling strategy was used to complete this study.

A purposeful sample is a nonprobability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This type of sampling can be advantageous in situations when the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern. For this study, a member of the north/south superintendents group recommended 25 of the 149 urban superintendents

identified in the target population. The researcher was able to qualify the 25 urban superintendents recommended and he qualified an additional 11 urban superintendents for this study. The strategies used included researching employment longevity in their current district through web pages, researching school board meeting minutes to gather evidence of governance training or CSBA conference attendance, and researching media releases to determine positive relationships with the community and school board. By selecting exemplary urban superintendents within California, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at a minimal expense.

The sample for the study was 16 exemplary urban school superintendents serving urban school districts within the state of California. Superintendents who met four out of the following five criteria were eligible and received consideration for this study:

1. Superintendent has worked 3 or more years in his/her current district.
2. Superintendent and board have participated in governance training.
3. Superintendent participated in annual CSBA conference.
4. Superintendent showed evidence of a positive superintendent, board, and community relationships.
5. Superintendent was recommended by two retired superintendents who are members of a north/south superintendents group.

Quantitative Sampling

After this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher identified and contacted 36 exemplary urban superintendents who met the eligibility criteria to complete the quantitative survey. The process for contacting sample participants is outlined as follows:

1. The researcher working with faculty advisors identified superintendents that met the study criteria.
2. The researcher contacted the superintendents via e-mail and explained the purpose, benefits, and risks of participating in the study. The researcher also explained the associated terms of anonymity for participants in the study.
3. Once the researcher secured agreement to participate in the study, the researcher e-mailed the following:
 - a. Invitation to participate letter (Appendix A)
 - b. Informed consent form to be signed and collected at the time of the interview (Appendix B)
 - c. Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix C)
 - d. Electronic survey titled, Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D)

Qualitative Sampling

The sample subject selection process occurred after the IRB reviewed and approved the study proposal. The researcher contacted the superintendents from a list of eligible superintendents who were considered exemplary and also met the purposeful selection criteria. At the end of the electronic Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey, the researcher asked participants if they were willing to volunteer for a follow-up interview. Six exemplary urban superintendents volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview. Of those six exemplary urban superintendents, five were randomly selected for the face-to-face interviews. These five participants were contacted for the qualitative face-to-face interview portion of the study in the following manner:

1. The researcher contacted the participant by phone or e-mail to re-explain the purpose of the study.
2. The researcher scheduled a 60-minute interview with each of the five exemplary superintendents. Prior to the interview the researcher e-mailed the following documents to the participant: (a) an invitation to participate letter (see Appendix A), (b) the Brandman University Research Participants Bill of Rights (see Appendix C), (c) an informed consent form (see Appendix B) to be signed and collected at the interview, (d) an audio release form to be signed and collected at the interview (see Appendix E), and (e) a copy of the interview questions and definitions of the five elements of trust contained in the Superintendent & School Board Trust Interview Protocol (see Appendix F).

Instrumentation

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis for this mixed-methods study instrumentation. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Mixed-method studies combine qualitative and quantitative paradigms in meaningful ways. It is a convergence of philosophy, viewpoints, traditions, methods, and conclusions” (p. 396). Also, Creswell (2005) believed a mixed-methods study could be advantageous because the data collected from the different methods may allow the researcher to understand the research problem better. The peer researchers, with the guidance of faculty advisors, developed a survey for quantitative data collection titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey and an interview guide for qualitative data collection titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol. The researcher administered the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey through the

online SurveyMonkey program. The researcher also used the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol with five of the exemplary urban superintendents.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

According to Patten (2012), the researcher is considered an instrument when conducting qualitative research. Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) cautioned that researchers as instruments in qualitative studies potentially influence the data collection due to the unique personality, characteristics and interview techniques of the researcher. Thus, biases may exist within the study because of how the researcher influenced the interviewee during the qualitative interview sessions. During this study, the researcher was employed as the executive director of secondary education for a public unified school district and served as a superintendent cabinet member. Based on employment history, and familiarity with the participant's roles and responsibilities, the researcher brought potential bias to the study. The researcher conducted qualitative interviews with the research participants. The interview questions and responses were done in person and were recorded digitally via a handheld recording device.

Quantitative Instrumentation

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that using an instrument to acquire data, which relates to some facet of the subjects of the study, is a central component of quantitative research. The quantitative survey instrument, Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey, was influenced by a culmination of the literature review conducted by peer researchers, the knowledge of faculty advisors, and based on The Values Institute theoretical framework (Weisman, 2016) regarding trust. The Superintendent & School

Board Trust Survey consisted of a 30-question survey with six questions relating to each of the five variables of trust from The Values Institute theoretical framework (Weisman, 2016) and the research questions of this study. The survey participants responded to a 6-point Likert scale designed to collect their level of agreement with the statement presented. The response options included *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *disagree somewhat*, *agree somewhat*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. The peer researchers included the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey's Likert scale key before each question for clarity purposes.

The thematic research team originally planned to use The Values Institute theoretical framework's Values Pulse Survey (Weisman, 2016) initially intended for use in the business sector. A thorough analysis of the survey indicated that it was too general and lacked the specificity to uncover what strategies superintendents perceived as most important to building trust with and between school board members. With the guidance and input from faculty advisors, the revised survey titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey was developed based on the Values Institute's five domains of trust and a *thorough* review of the literature. The updated survey focused on education and the work of school superintendents in building trust with and between school board members. The Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey is specific to the role of the superintendent as the chief executive officer and leader of the governance team of school board members.

The survey was constructed, then delivered to participants through the electronic survey program, SurveyMonkey. The survey began with an explanation of the survey's purpose and background of the thematic dissertation topic on superintendents and trust.

The respondents were required to read the background and informed consent and voluntarily agree to participate before the survey opened.

Qualitative Instrumentation

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified five methods often used to collect data within a qualitative research study. The five methods included interviews, observations, questionnaires, document reviews, and audiovisual materials. When conducting qualitative research, Patton (2015) emphasized the importance of using inquiry through open-ended questions. The researcher used a qualitative design instrument through the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol. The Superintendent & School Board Trust Interview Protocol consisted of an interview with open-ended questions generated by the literature and developed collaboratively with peer researchers and faculty. The interview design included an opening introduction to the research and the researcher.

The researcher conducted all interviews in person in the superintendent's natural setting. The qualitative interview began with an overview of the study including an explanation of the Research Participants Bill of Rights, obtaining the participant's signature on the informed consent form and the audio recording release form. The researcher collected these documents and proceeded with the interview. The researcher used open-ended questions and discussion prompts identified in the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol to engage the participants in an interactive dialogue. Specifically, a culmination of the literature review conducted by peer researchers, the knowledge of faculty advisors, and The Values Institute theoretical framework (Weisman, 2016) influenced the interview questions in this study. The

Values Institute theoretical framework (Weisman, 2016) included the following five components of trust: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection (Weisman, 2016). The thematic peer researchers developed open-ended qualitative interview questions through an iterative process. The questions were analyzed by peer researchers and faculty advisors to ensure that the questions successfully addressed the trust variables. The peer researchers and faculty advisors selected the 10 interview questions after numerous revisions.

Each peer researcher field tested the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol independently. Each test participant also participated in an exit interview at the conclusion of the interview with the purpose of providing feedback regarding the interview process and the questions asked. The pilot interview also involved a peer observer who was a doctoral student at Brandman University trained and experienced in conducting research and conducting interviews. The peer observer was with tasked with giving feedback to the researcher and assessing the neutrality of the researcher. The peer observer completed an evaluation and provided input regarding the familiarity of and fluency with the research questions. The researcher also completed a survey evaluation form for each participant and discussed the findings with peer researchers to assess their thoughts and observations about the interview. The faculty chair reviewed and evaluated the findings. The peer researchers made revisions to the questions as a result of participant and researcher input.

The peer researcher and faculty advisors created the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol to arrive at qualitative data to answer the research questions. The researcher recorded the interview session with informed consent

from the participant. The interview questions and responses were then transcribed through an online, confidential transcription service. The study participants were provided a copy of the transcription to review, add or repair information. The data were evaluated, placed into themes, coded, analyzed, and transformed into qualitative data.

Field Testing

The researcher field tested the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey with a sitting superintendent who met four of the five identified criteria. The superintendent selected for the field test was not included in the sample. Following completion of the pilot survey, the researcher provided the participant with the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey Feedback Form (see Appendix G) to assess the quality and appropriateness of the survey and to identify ambiguous questions. Also, each of the thematic peer researchers field tested the survey. The researcher and the thematic peer researchers and faculty advisors analyzed the feedback data, and revised and approved the final survey instrument.

The researcher and each thematic peer researcher also field tested the Superintendent & School Board Trust Interview Protocol independently. The field-test participant met the criteria identified in the sample. At the conclusion of the interview, the field-test participant provided feedback using the Field-Test Participant Feedback Questions (see Appendix H). This researcher also received feedback from a peer observer trained and experienced in qualitative interviews using the Interview Feedback Reflection Questions (see Appendix I). The researcher and thematic peer researchers analyzed the data acquired from the four field-test participants and the four expert observers. The peer researchers and faculty advisors utilized the feedback from the field-

test participants and observers to revise the instrument. The final interview instrument was then approved by the faculty and the peer researchers.

Validity

Validity covers a broad range of areas. Roberts (2010) defined validity as “the degree to which your instrument truly measures what it purports to measure” (p. 151). Specifically, validity refers to the extent the assessment tool measures the intended outcome, thus ensuring the study findings are accurate. In regard to research, validity refers to the accuracy with which a study answers the study question or the strength of the study conclusions. For outcome measures, such as surveys or tests, validity refers to the accuracy of measurement.

Content Validity

Patton (2015) emphasized the significance of content validity in a research study. A study must have content validity to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretations and to ensure the reader can make reasonable conclusions about relationships from the data collected. Patton explained content validity as the dependence upon the construction of instruments to provide the elements of the construct to measure the research questions (Patton, 2015). The construction of both the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey instrument and the Superintendent & School Board Trust Interview Protocol was based on The Values Institute framework (Weisman, 2016) and a review of the literature. The researcher addressed this limitation in part by the following steps:

1. The researcher conducted practice interviews with participants with similar exemplary leadership traits before the launch of the data collection phase of the study. The

practice interviews were audio recorded and observed by a peer with knowledge and expertise regarding interviewing skills.

2. The researcher reviewed the audio tape recording for feedback related to interviewing techniques. This strategy helped validate the appropriateness of the researcher's interview skills.
3. Each participant was provided a copy of the written transcription to review and provide corrections to the document (Appendix H).

The researcher, in conjunction with the peer researchers and faculty advisors, revised the survey questions through an interactive process. This strategy contributed to the assurance that the instruments addressed the areas needed to respond to the research questions. Also, this process helped validate the interview protocol and survey questions developed.

Reliability

Seminal researchers, including Creswell (2003), Patton (2015), and Roberts (2010), indicated that reliable studies occur when the data collection, data analysis, and results are consistent. The researcher implemented strategies to increase reliability, starting with the development of the instruments. The peer researchers and faculty advisors developed reliable interview and survey instruments. The thorough development of the instruments assisted the researcher with avoiding data collection bias. Also, the researcher field tested the instruments, which allowed the researcher to practice, solicit feedback, and work toward consistency with the interview process. For this study, the researcher utilized the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol, which included predrafted questions and discussion prompts.,

Internal Reliability of Data

Internal reliability suggests that a researcher independent of the study would generate the same conclusions by reviewing the same data. Remaining consistent with data collection procedures, data analysis, and data interpretation is critical to internal reliability.

Intercoder Reliability of Data

Patton (2015) stated that intercoder reliability is when an evaluator, independent of the study, reviews the data and draws the same conclusions and consistencies from coding the characteristics as the researcher. For this study, the researcher used a peer researcher from the thematic team to review and code the themes. Intercoder agreement is reached when the researcher and the third-party coder have an agreement level of 80% or higher in their coding (Creswell, 2018). The peer research team acquired at least 80% agreement on codes and themes, thus ensuring the accuracy of the themes.

External Reliability of Data

A researcher can accomplish external reliability when an independent researcher replicates the study and generates the same results and conclusions. The qualitative data within this study would be difficult to reproduce because the behavior and interactions of both the participants and the researchers may differ.

Data Collection

The researcher completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) certification in protecting human research participants (Appendix J) and obtained approval from the Brandman University IRB before collecting data. This process ensured the protection of participants' privacy rights throughout the study. All participants agreed to informed

consent prior to data collection. The researcher provided the security of all data and the privacy of the participants by securing the data on a password-protected computer and locking all printed documents in a locked office safe. It will not be possible to identify participants as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

Participants will be identified as Superintendent A, Superintendent B, and Superintendent C, and so forth.

Mixed-methods studies require data from both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher collected electronic survey results and transcribed interviews for this research study. The sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach collects and analyzes quantitative data, then collects and analyzes qualitative data (Patten, 2012).

This design provided an explanation and interpretation of the findings of the quantitative study design and provided insight into the lived experiences of the urban superintendents interviewed as well (Creswell, Fetters, & Ivankova, 2004).

Quantitative Data Collection

The Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey was designed to collect the quantitative data. This researcher, along with three peer researchers, and faculty advisors drafted 30 multiple-choice survey questions on a Likert scale design. The Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey Likert scale ranged from *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *disagree somewhat*, *agree somewhat*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. The researcher administered this instrument to 16 exemplary urban superintendents. The surveys were distributed electronically through the computer-generated software program SurveyMonkey. A password protected SurveyMonkey account secured the survey questions and responses. The researcher included the purpose of the study, the

confidentiality clause, and the survey link in the e-mail. Also, all survey participants were prompted to review and sign the informed consent document before beginning the survey.

Qualitative Data Collection

The researcher identified the exemplary urban superintendents who volunteered to participate in the interview portion of the study by leaving their name and contact information on the last question of the survey. The researcher e-mailed the survey link and the informed consent document via SurveyMonkey to potential study participants. This process maintained the anonymity of study participants. The survey had an assessment window of 1 week and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The researcher, along with three peer researchers, and faculty advisors drafted 10 in-depth, open-ended interview questions (Patton, 2015). The five participants signed an audio-recording release form before engaging in the interview process. The interviews were conducted in person to establish a personal connection and acquire a better understanding of the body language nuances. The qualitative data in this study were collected through transcribed interviews with the five exemplary urban superintendents. At the conclusion of the meetings, the researcher sent the recording to an online transcription service to transcribe the questions and answers and share the data in written form. Each participant was provided a copy of the written transcription for review (Appendix H).

The researcher used a systematic process to convert the raw data into themes (Roberts, 2010). This process included applying the transcribed interview data, coding the data, categorizing the codes, and labeling recognizable patterns within the data

(Patton, 2002). The researcher coded the data by hand and with the assistance of NVivo. The transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and scanned for common themes. The researcher captured all themes by reading the transcripts multiple times. The researcher proposed themes, reviewed transcripts again, and placed the data into identified themes. The researcher repeated the previously stated process for accuracy purposes.

Data Analysis

This mixed-methods study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The researcher gathered the quantitative data through surveys and the qualitative data through face-to-face interviews. Because this is an explanatory study, the researcher collected and transcribed the quantitative data first, and then transcribed and coded the qualitative data. Upon completion of the quantitative and qualitative process, the researcher examined the data and established the research findings.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The researcher surveyed 16 exemplary superintendents who met the identified criteria. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the quantitative data collected. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) reiterated the importance of descriptive statistics by indicating, “Descriptive statistics are used to transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 149).

Central tendency. Central tendency includes the following three numerical data sets: mean, median, and mode. The mean, the most commonly used central tendency, determines the average. For this study, the mean is the average Likert score for all participants who completed the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. The median serves as the midpoint of a data set with numbers equally distributed above and

below the middle score. Finally, the mode is the number that appears most frequently (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher used the mean along with the frequency in the quantitative analysis of data.

Standard deviation. Standard deviation is a single number that indicates the variability of numerical index scores by reporting the distance from the average score (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study the standard deviation was used to report the variability, or spread, of a group of scores collected from the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. The researcher used the mean along with the frequency in the quantitative analysis of data.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) believed that researchers must have a thorough understanding of how to interpret the text to inform the research study. After recording the interviews with the five superintendents, the researcher submitted the audio recordings to an online transcription service tasked with generating a narrative of the questions and answers. The raw data acquired from the transcription provided essential information regarding categories and patterns, which in turn supported strength and frequency of the data. The information collected was also used to answer the established research questions. Once the researcher compiled, transcribed, and coded the data, he transitioned into the validation stages. Patton (2015) described intercoder reliability as the process of utilizing a third-party evaluator to analyze, verify, and determine the same conclusion for the data collected. For this study, the researcher provided a peer researcher with one of the five transcribed interviews. After the thematic researcher completed the verification of the data, the researcher looked for the level of intercoder reliability. Lombard, Snyder-Duch,

and Bracken (2004) established intercoder reliability as “coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices” (p. 3). The process of cross-checking data with an independent researcher created a level of reliability (Patton, 2015). The peer researchers reviewed the patterns and themes acquired from the qualitative data. The results of this qualitative data analysis assisted the researcher with answering the research questions, what strategies that urban superintendents use to build trust with a between school board members using each of the five C’s.

Limitations

Limitations in any study are often out of the researcher’s control and may impact the results of the research and affect the generalizability of the study (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). This thematic study of trust was replicated by four different peer researchers, who utilized the same quantitative and qualitative instruments and methodology but were focused on different types of superintendents—urban, suburban, rural and ROCP—which supported the validity of this study’s findings. There were a variety of limitations that may have affected this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study including the researcher as the instrument, time, and sample size.

Researcher as the Instrument

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher becomes one of the instruments of the study, which could negatively affect the credibility of the study (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). The researcher of this study has worked in public education for almost 20 years and has served in a leadership capacity for 10 of those years. The researcher has conducted numerous interviews for various purposes in an educational

setting. The researcher facilitated the interviews face-to-face in an environment that was comfortable for the participant. The transcriptions of the interview were sent to the participants to ensure the accuracy and correctness of the transcriptions and to ensure the neutral and transparent representation of the participant's responses.

Time

There were time limitations for this study as no research could be conducted until after the Brandman University BUIRB granted approval. As a result, data collection had to occur at the beginning of the school year before the holiday season when superintendents were not accessible due to work schedules. Superintendents are among the busiest people in education and society and as such the interviews had to be restricted to no more than 60 minutes in order to respect their schedule. Additionally, the completion of the surveys and the retrieval of the superintendents' interview feedback had to be obtained before the start of their busy holiday season when they would be attending numerous community and school events.

Sample Size

The use of a purposeful convenience reputational sample for this study—16 urban superintendents for the survey and five urban superintendents for the interviews, all within the geographical boundaries of California—may have limited the generalizability of the results to the total population of superintendents. The sample size for the quantitative portion of this mixed-methods study was limited to 16 superintendents for each of the thematic peer researchers. The sample size for the qualitative interviews was limited to five superintendents for each of the thematic peer researchers. These sample

sizes were determined and reviewed by the thematic peer researchers and the faculty advisors.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief explanation and overview of the methodology. The purpose statement, research questions, and research design were also introduced. The researcher then defined and outlined the population, sample, data collection instruments, methods of data collection, and methods of data analysis. Both quantitative data (via surveys) and qualitative data collection and analysis were used to address the purpose and research questions. The chapter concluded with potential limitations to the study and outlined the precautionary measures taken to protect study participants who volunteered to participate in the study.

The researcher studied superintendents working within urban school districts. The other three thematic peer researchers studied superintendents working in other demographic and geographical locations including, suburban, rural, and ROP. The thematic peer researchers utilized the same methodology and instruments with demographic and geographical locations. The goal of the thematic peer researchers was to identify and describe the strategies superintendents use to build trust with and between school board members using the five domains of Weisman's (2016) trust model (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection). Collectively, the thematic peer researchers provided insight into how superintendents use competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection to build trust with and between school board members within their organizations. Chapter IV provides the results of the research findings and detailed descriptions of both the qualitative and analysis. Chapter V provides a

descriptive analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, the significant findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study identifies and describes the strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important when building trust with and between school board members. This chapter identifies the quantitative results obtained through an electronic survey distributed to exemplary urban superintendents within the state of California and describes the qualitative results acquired through face-to-face interviews. Chapter IV begins with a review of the purpose statement and research questions. Next, the chapter explains the research methods used and highlights the data collection procedures. The chapter then summarizes the population and sample used for the study. Chapter IV concludes with a presentation of the data and a summary of the findings. The data collected from the quantitative surveys address each research question and are presented in a narrative form followed by a table format. The data collected from the qualitative interviews also address each research question and are presented in a narrative format, including direct quotes from exemplary urban superintendents. The qualitative data are also presented in table format.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust between school board members.

Research Questions

1. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through competence?
2. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through consistency?
3. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through concern?
4. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through candor?
5. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through connection?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study was conducted using an explanatory mixed-methods design. Creswell (2005) stated, “Mixed methods research is a good design to use if you seek to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 510). For the quantitative portion of the study, the researcher used a survey titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D) to identify the strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceived as most important to build trust with and between school board members. Peer researchers and faculty advisors developed the survey instrument. The researcher field tested the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D) to measure the accuracy and relevance of the survey questions. The survey instrument was then distributed electronically via e-mail and 16 exemplary urban superintendents completed the survey.

For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher conducted five face-to-face interviews to describe the strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceived as most important to build trust with and between school board members. The interviews were structured and guided through the use of an interview guide titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E). Peer researchers and faculty advisors developed the interview protocol. The researcher field tested the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E) while a peer researcher, who was trained and experienced with research and interview protocols, observed the process to ensure that quality interview procedures and techniques were followed. Six of the 16 exemplary urban superintendents who completed the survey, volunteered to participate in face-to-face interviews. The researcher randomly selected five of the six exemplary urban superintendents to participate in the face-to-face interviews.

Survey and Interview Data Collection

The researcher distributed the electronic survey, titled Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D), via SurveyMonkey to 36 exemplary urban superintendents. The quantitative survey identified what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. Data collection was anonymous as the researcher provided the security of all data and the privacy of the participants by securing the data on a password-protected computer and locking all printed documents in a locked office safe. It will not be possible to identify participants as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

Participants were identified as Superintendent A, Superintendent B, Superintendent C, Superintendent D, and Superintendent E.

The researcher conducted five face-to-face interviews with exemplary urban superintendents. Each exemplary urban superintendent maintained anonymity through a confidential identification code generated and distributed by the researcher. The researcher asked each participant in the research study the same questions through scripted interview prompts from the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E). The interview protocol included questions related to each of the five domains studied: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The researcher recorded all interviews with a digital recording device. The audio recordings were transcribed through an online transcription service and coded by the researcher for emergent themes. Upon completion of both the quantitative and qualitative measures, the data were then interpreted to ensure the strength and consistency of the data (Patton, 2015).

Interview Process and Procedures

The 36 exemplary urban superintendents who received an electronic survey via e-mail had an opportunity to volunteer for the qualitative portion of the study. The final question of the survey asked each exemplary urban superintendent if he or she wanted to participate in an interview. Of the 36 potential participants, 16 exemplary urban superintendents completed the survey, and seven volunteered for the interview. The researcher then randomly contacted the exemplary urban superintendents and selected the first five who committed to the face-to-face interview. The researcher e-mailed a brief overview and description of the study, along with the invitation to participate document.

Upon their agreement to be interviewed, the researcher e-mailed the Research Participants Bill of Rights (Appendix C), the informed consent (Appendix B), the audio release (Appendix F) form, and the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E). The researcher reviewed and obtained signatures on the informed consent (Appendix B) form and the audio recording (Appendix F) release form before starting the interviews. The interview questions were asked using the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E) to ensure consistency with the interviews.

Intercoder Reliability

Patton (2015) stated that intercoder reliability is when an evaluator, independent of the study, reviews the data and draws the same conclusions and consistencies from coding the characteristics as the researcher. For this study, the researcher used a peer researcher from the thematic team to review and code the themes. An intercoder agreement is reached when the researcher and the third-party coder have an agreement level of 80% or higher in their coding (Creswell, 2018). The peer research team acquired at least 80% agreement on codes and themes, thus making the data statistically significant. This strategy ensured the accuracy of the themes.

Population

A population is defined as “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). Creswell (2005) explained that a population consists of individuals who possess unique traits or characteristics that differentiate them from others. The overall population for this study was 1,026 superintendents working within the California Department of

Education system. The target population for this study included 149 superintendents working in urban school districts in California (NCES, n.d.-a; ProximityOne, 2018).

Sample

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified a sample as a group of subjects representing a specific population from whom the researcher collects data. Creswell (2005) explained that the researcher selects the sample for purposes of making generalizations about the target population. The sample for this research study included 16 exemplary urban school superintendents who worked in California. While a mixed-methods design lends itself to various probability and nonprobability sampling strategies, nonprobability purposeful sampling was used to complete this study.

The sample for the study was 16 exemplary urban school superintendents serving urban school districts within the state of California. Superintendents who met four out of the following five criteria were eligible and received consideration for this study:

1. Superintendent has worked 3 or more years in his/her current district.
2. Superintendent and board have participated in governance training.
3. Superintendent participated in annual CSBA conference.
4. Superintendent showed evidence of positive superintendent, board, and community relationships.
5. Superintendent was recommended by two retired superintendents who are members of a north/south superintendents group.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The presentation and the analysis of data in this chapter were generated quantitatively through electronic surveys, and qualitatively through face-to-face

interviews. Thirty-five exemplary urban superintendents received the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D) via a SurveyMonkey link in an e-mail. Sixteen of the 36 surveys were completed (44%). Of the 16 exemplary urban superintendents who completed the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D), five were interviewed face to face for the qualitative portion of this study. The Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D) and the Superintendent & School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E) asked exemplary urban superintendents to identify what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important when building trust with and between school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The findings from the surveys and interviews were compiled, analyzed, and organized into a narrative and a chart related to how they answered each of the research questions.

Data Results for Research Question 1

The first research question asked, “What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through competence?” For the purposes of this study, competence was defined as “the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected” (Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Quantitative summary—competence. The survey data results for the first research question were organized by each question within the competence domain. The exemplary urban superintendents recorded a mean score range between 5.1875 and 5.7500. The results fell between the *agree* and *strongly agree* range. The results aligned with the research Handford and Leithwood (2013) conducted of three high-trust and three

low-trust schools. They found that competence was the element most often referenced to building trust.

The question that received the highest mean score was, “I work with the board members to achieve the district’s goals.” The survey question generated a mean score of 5.7500 and a standard deviation of 0.447. Also, 75.00% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The survey question, “I lead vision setting and manage the strategic actions of the school district” recorded a mean score of 5.6875 and a standard deviation of 0.478. Also, 75.00% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question.

The survey question that received the lowest mean score was, “I focus the work of board members on the quality of services the district provides to students, staff, and community.” The survey question generated a mean score of 5.1875 and a standard deviation of 0.655. The survey question, “I promote the capability of school board members,” also generated a mean score of 5.1875 and a standard deviation of 0.750. The respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question, 31.25% and 37.50% respectively. Table 2 summarizes the overall data results by survey question.

Qualitative summary and major findings—competence. Each of the five exemplary urban superintendents who participated in a face-to-face interview was asked two questions within the competence domain. The competence domain generated six themes, two of which were considered major findings. The themes collectively produced a total of 169 codes.

Communication. The most important theme within the competence domain was communication as it produced 47 of the 169 codes (28%) within this domain. The data

Table 2

Quantitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Competence

Competence	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Disagree somewhat		Agree somewhat		Agree		Strongly agree		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
I focus the work of board members on the quality of services the district provides to students, staff, and community.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	12.50%	9	56.25%	5	31.25%	5.1875	0.655
I work with the board members to achieve the district's goals.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	4	25.00%	12	75.00%	5.7500	0.447
I promote the capability of school board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%	3	18.75%	7	43.75%	6	37.50%	5.1875	0.750
I create opportunities for board members to learn and grow.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	18.75%	4	25.00%	9	56.20%	5.3750	0.806
I promote collaborative decision making with the governance team.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	6.75%	5	31.25%	10	62.50%	5.5625	0.629
I lead vision setting and manage the strategic actions of the school district.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	5	31.30%	11	68.75%	5.6875	0.478

results are consistent with the literature as the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed expressed the importance of using communication to share data and to move the agenda forward. Tschannen-Moran (2014) shared the importance of setting high standards, pushing results, problem solving, hard work, and setting an example. Similar to the strategies that Tschannen-Moran proposed, the exemplary urban superintendents discussed using communication to move the agenda forward skillfully. For instance, Superintendent B recalled a three-step process used:

So, every single time we have an idea or an initiative or some important information, I share it in three increments. One is usually a quick little note in a Friday report. Then I'll follow it up with three to six individual conversations with the trustees over a month—a series of just informal conversations during my one on ones with board members. And then ultimately by the time we get to the boardroom, I already know what the board is thinking, I already know what their questions are.

Superintendent C discussed a similar approach, “Shared decision making comes through the board having as much information as they possibly can, teaching them as much as I possibly can and then letting them help me, help them towards whatever their board goal is.” Superintendent C went on to explain the strategy used to secure support for a facilities bond, “I kept bringing them data. I showed them our likelihood of winning, I showed them pictures of our facilities. I surveyed our staff. Perception data, process data, and performance data were the three kinds of data I brought them.”

Governance training. The governance training theme was the second most important theme as it generated 39 of the 169 codes (23%) within this domain.

Superintendent D indicated that educating the school board was important.

Superintendent D stated, “You’re making sure they have access to conferences and literature so they can read about things. You can’t keep them in a silo.” Superintendent A indicated, “By having board members at the table with you during difficult decisions, in the design process rather than just the decision-making process, is helpful. It’s inviting board members into the details, but also having relationships.” Superintendent A discussed the importance of balancing his/her role: “Now I need you to get back into the governance role and the policy role.” Superintendent C emphasized the importance of bringing the school board back to the shared goals. Superintendent C stated, “It is shared decision making, when there’s a big issue that’s out there, I give them all the information. I get input from them and then I go forward with my decision, after I get input from them.” Superintendent C added, “We were going to do this together, as a governance team of six. Even when they were hesitant, reluctant, and not completely confident, they still went with me on a five [to] zero vote because they trusted the process.”

Themes of lower significance. Collaboration and engagement and input and feedback recorded 30 codes (18%), and vulnerability and transparency secured 23 codes (14%) within this domain. The themes that produced the least number of codes were relationship and rapport and take ownership as they each received 15 codes (9%). Table 3 shows the frequencies of each of the six themes as described and coded by interviews with the exemplary urban superintendents.

Table 3

Qualitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Competence

Themes	Frequency	%
Communication	47	27.80
Governance training	39	23.00
Collaboration engagement and input & feedback	30	17.75
Vulnerability & transparency	23	13.60
Relationship & rapport	15	8.87
Take ownership	15	8.87

Note. $N = 169$.

Quantitative and qualitative comparison. The exemplary urban superintendents expressed the importance of the survey questions posed on the competence domain as they recorded a mean score range of 5.1875 and 5.7500. The results fell between the *agree* and *strongly agree* range. The questions that recorded the highest mean scores and the most *strongly agree* responses aligned with the themes generated from the qualitative data results. Specifically, communication, governance training, collaboration and engagement, and input and feedback accounted for 116 codes combined (69%).

It is interesting to note that the survey question, “I focus the work of board members on the quality of services the district provides to students, staff, and community,” recorded the lowest mean score and *strongly agree* response rate. The data results are consistent with the qualitative interview results as the exemplary urban superintendents discussed, but did not highlight, the importance aligning the work of school board to district services. In addition, the survey question, “I promote the capability of school board members,” also recorded the lowest mean score and *strongly agree* response rate. The results from the survey contradicted the results of the interview

as all five of the exemplary urban superintendents emphasized the importance of developing school board member capacity during their interview.

Data Results for Research Question 2

The second research question asked, “What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through consistency.” For the purposes of this study, consistency is the confidence that a person’s pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable, and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016). The survey data results for the second research question, aligned to the consistency domain, were organized by each question within that domain.

Quantitative summary—consistency. The exemplary urban superintendents who participated in the study recorded a mean score range between 5.125 and 5.875 on the consistency domain. The data results are consistent with the literature as the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed expressed the importance of using consistency to build trust with and between school board members. Covey and Merrill (2006) and White et al. (2016) indicated that accessibility and consistent leadership behavior earn credibility and trust.

The survey question that received the highest mean score was, “I behave in a manner consistent with my role and responsibilities.” The survey question recorded a mean score of 5.875 and a standard deviation of 0.340. Also, 87.50% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The survey questions, “I make commitments to board members I can keep,” and “I keep my commitments to board members,” each recorded mean scores of 5.800 and standard deviations of 0.414.

The two survey questions aligned with Covey and Merrill's (2006) statement regarding keeping commitments on a regular basis serving as the quickest way to build trust. Also, 81.25% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey questions.

The survey question that received the lowest mean score was, "I hold myself and board members accountable for actions." The survey question recorded a mean score of 5.125 and a standard deviation of 0.885. Also, 37.50% of respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. It is important to note that although the survey questions received the lowest mean score and the lowest *strongly agree* response rates within the domain, the results still fell within the *agree* to *strongly agree* range. Table 4 summarizes the overall data results by survey question.

Qualitative summary and major findings—consistency. Each of the five exemplary urban superintendents who participated in a face-to-face interview was asked two questions within the consistency domain. The consistency domain generated seven themes, two of which were considered major findings. The themes collectively produced a total of 92 codes. The data results are consistent with the literature as the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed expressed the importance of using consistency when building trust with and between school board members. Reliability is an important element of consistency. When discussing the importance of reliability, Tschannen-Moran (2014) stated, "The sense that one can depend on another consistently is an important element of trust" (p. 33).

Communication. The most important theme within the consistency domain was communication as it produced 33 of the 92 codes (36%) falling within this domain. The data results are consistent with the literature as the exemplary urban superintendents

Table 4

Quantitative Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Trust Domain—Consistency

Consistency	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Disagree somewhat		Agree somewhat		Agree		Strongly agree		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
I behave in a manner consistent with my role and responsibilities.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	12.50%	14	87.5%	5.875	.340
I create an environment where board members have the opportunity to accomplish their goals and responsibilities.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	37.50%	10	62.5%	5.625	.500
I let board members know what is expected from them as members of a governance team.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	12.5%	6	37.50%	8	50.0%	5.375	.718
I make commitments to board members I can keep.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	18.75%	13	81.25%	5.800	.414
I keep my commitments to board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	18.75%	13	81.25%	5.800	.414
I hold myself and board members accountable for actions.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	6.25%	2	12.5%	7	43.75%	6	37.50%	5.125	.885

interviewed expressed the importance of communication. The data results align with Lencioni's (2012) strategy to overcommunicate clarity through cascading communication, specifically by moving the organization in the same direction by promptly sharing clear messages to constituents. Superintendent A indicated,

You build feedback loops so the board members know they're going to get an update on Friday. But they also know if there's a crisis, or if there's pertinent information they need, they're going to get it in real time.

Superintendent B concurred and stated, "So it's not unusual, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, just questions and comments. Or they wait for my one-on-one with them to kind of get the follow-up." Superintendent B added, "A forum for them to kind of express concern, ask questions, validate some of the things that we've written about, or just really work harder on kind of clarifying some things. So again, communication, communication."

Superintendent E discussed honest, straightforward communication. Superintendent E stated, "I worked with the board president five times a day on messaging. She was very much a part of whatever was going to be messaged. I always gave the messaging to the board before I submitted it." Superintendent E provided direct instructions for the school board members to follow. Superintendent E stated, "You need to respond to me in 15 minutes if you have questions or changes. I had to be timely with information. Them knowing what our messaging was going to be before it went out was huge."

Superintendent C supported the emergency communication protocol shared by Superintendent E: "It was this constant communication. I think the fact that I communicated every step with them, it was actually a really great collaborative crisis process." Superintendent C continued, "I told them a time. Constituents called and they

said, I will let you know at six o'clock. I did it with fidelity. I gave them a script so that they knew what to tell people and the community.”

Follow-through. The follow-through theme was the second most important theme as it generated 16 codes (17%) within this domain. Superintendent A stated, “I mean, it goes . . . your word’s your bond, it goes back to I do it. . . . Whatever I say I’m going to do. I do it. I’m very clear.” Superintendent A continued, “If I change my mind about something based on feedback, I’ll be very clear. This was my decision, this is the feedback I received, this is why I’m changing my decision. I go back to that person.” Superintendent E supported Superintendents A’s comments by stating, “Get back to them. Make sure I follow up once I get the information. Just found out, this is not credible. That’s the job of superintendency these days, is you’re always tryin’ to keep ahead of the information.” The data produced within the follow-through theme was consistent with White et al. (2016) who discussed the importance on being trustworthy. Specifically, leaders must honor commitments. If leaders are unable to honor commitments they must apologize through communication channels and ensure that breaking commitments does not become part of their practice.

Further, the relationship and rapport theme recorded 12 codes (13%) and collaboration secured 11 codes (12%) within the consistency domain. The code that produced the least number of frequencies was accessibility as it produced five codes (5%). It is interesting to note that all five of the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed discussed the importance of remaining accessible to school board members, yet the theme produced the fewest codes. Table 5 shows the frequencies of each of the

seven themes as described and coded by interviews with the exemplary urban superintendents.

Table 5

Qualitative Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Trust Domain—Consistency

Themes	Frequency	%
Communication	33	35.86
Follow through	16	17.39
Relationships & rapport	12	13.00
Collaboration	11	11.95
Honesty & transparency	8	8.69
Governance training	7	7.60
Accessibility	5	5.43

Note. $N = 92$.

Quantitative and qualitative comparison. The exemplary urban superintendents recorded a mean score range of 5.125 and 5.875 on the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. The results fell between the *agree* and *strongly agree* range. The questions that recorded the highest mean scores and the most frequent *strongly agree* responses aligned with the themes generated from the qualitative data results. Specifically, communication, and follow through accounted for 49 (53%) of the total codes.

It is interesting to note a contradiction between the quantitative and qualitative data within the consistency domain. The survey question, “I hold myself and board members accountable for actions,” fell within the *agree* to *strongly agree* range; however, while all five of the exemplary urban superintendents expressed the importance of holding school board members accountable, only two of the respondents explicitly discussed the importance of self-accountability.

Data Results for Research Question 3

The third research question asked, “What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through concern?” For the purposes of this study, concern was defined as the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability and support, and motivate and care for each other (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Covey & Merrill, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

Quantitative summary and major findings—concern. The survey data results for the third research question were organized by each question included within the concern domain. The respondents recorded a mean score range between 4.0625 and 5.6875 on the domain. The results fell between the *somewhat agree* and *strongly agree* range. It is interesting to note that the concern domain recorded the largest range between the low mean score 4.0625 and the high mean score 5.6875.

The question that received the highest mean score was, “I treat each board member positively and with respect,” as the survey question recorded a mean score of 5.6875 and a standard deviation of 0.602. Also, 75.00% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. While three out of the remaining four questions within the concern domain generated similar mean scores, it is interesting to note that 68.50% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question, “I take time to meet personally with each board member to understand their

concerns.” The survey data collected were consistent with the literature. White et al. (2016) stated that showing concern is fundamental to building trust.

The survey question, “I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance,” recorded the lowest mean score of 4.0625 and standard deviation of 1.388. Only 12.50% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. It is interesting to note that while the exemplary urban superintendents surveyed recognized the importance of concern when building trust with and between school board members, the domain produced the most variance within the study. The survey question, “I take time to meet personally with each board member to understand their concerns,” generated one *disagree somewhat* response from the exemplary urban superintendents surveyed. The survey question, “I demonstrate respect and concern for each board member,” also generated one *disagree somewhat* response. Lastly, the survey question, “I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance” generated, three *disagree somewhat* responses, one *disagree* response, and one *strongly disagree* response. Table 6 summarizes the overall data results by survey question.

Qualitative summary and major findings—concern. Each of the five exemplary urban superintendents who volunteered for a face-to-face interview was asked two questions within the concern domain. The concern domain generated five themes, three of which were to be considered major findings. The themes collectively produced a total of 137 codes.

Communication. The most important theme within the concern domain was communication as it produced 40 of the 137 codes (29%) within this domain. Transparency, including empathic, honest, and direct communication, emerged within the

Table 6

Quantitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Concern

Concern	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Disagree somewhat		Agree somewhat		Agree		Strongly agree		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
I take time to meet personally with each board member to understand their concerns.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	11	68.75%	5.5000	0.894
I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance.	1	6.25%	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	4	25.00%	5	31.25%	2	12.50%	4.0625	1.388
I am a good listener.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	7	43.75%	8	50.00%	5.4375	0.629
I treat each board member positively and with respect.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	12	75.00%	5.6875	0.602
I am patient with the questions and issues of interest to board members.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	7	43.75%	9	56.25%	5.5625	0.512
I demonstrate respect and concern for each board member.	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	5	31.25%	10	62.50%	5.5000	0.816

interviews. The data collected were consistent with the literature, including Llopis (2013) who indicated that transparent communication leads to trust and improved performance. Superintendent B stated, “So again, it’s brutally honest conversations. It’s regular trust. Courageous, honest, and they respect you more even when you disagree. Your job as a superintendent is to care and feed your board. That includes being honest with them.” Superintendent A responded empathically:

I remember a board member going through medical issues and just sending a quick note or a phone call and talking about it, and understanding what that person is going through. That helps because when someone personally is going through a difficult time, they’re going to lash out, or have emotions that can come out at a board meeting.

Superintendent D responded empathically as well: “To get to know who they are. I’ve had a board member die on me. I’ve had one that’s really sick right now, and I visit his home, and say, anything we can do to help you out?”

Relationship and rapport. The relationship and rapport theme was second as it generated 33 of 137 codes (24%) within the concern domain. The data collected align with that of White et al. (2016) as they stressed the importance of connecting with people on a human level as a precursor to building trust. Superintendent B discussed the importance of ongoing relationships and rapport by indicating, “You don’t build relationships during difficult times in a crisis. It’s ongoing. It’s like at the negotiation table. Negotiation doesn’t begin at the table. It’s the relationships you built before you get there, in terms of classic collective bargaining.” Superintendent E provided insight into building the relationships that Superintendent B alluded to by hosting meetings.

Superintendent E stated, “Some of it’s very simple. I always ensure at board meetings that the dinner that we serve is something they like. It’s just very simple things, that they’re comfortable.” Superintendent D recalled an empathic approach:

So, they are people, too. And so, I’ve had some call me ‘because they’ve had issues with their marriage. So, it makes you feel good that you’ve built that trust where somebody, a board member, can call you and tell you about something very personal because they feel like they can, and it’s going to stay with you.

And you’re like a confidant. Makes you feel like a team.

Superintendent D also discussed the importance of board members and superintendents serving one another. Superintendent D stated, “Board members should be blocking for you with the public. Every time they’re out there, they should say good things about you. You should block for board members too. So, when people come to board meetings, they see teamwork.”

Governance training. Governance training secured 31 out of the 137 codes (23%) within the concern domain. The importance the exemplary urban superintendents reported aligns with the literature outlined in CSBA’s (n.d.-d) mission to advocate for and provide training to elected officials to support school-aged children. Superintendent D discussed the importance of school board members engaging in professional learning, regardless of the financial circumstances. Superintendent D stated, “I don’t care if you’re in a recession, board members need to go to CSBA. Okay! That’s where they go to school to learn how to be a good board member, and what a good school district looks like.” Superintendent C discussed the interactions during the governance process: “Accepting people’s input and never placing judgment on the input provided. The

minute that you start to judge the input that people have is when they don't feel safe anymore. I take all input and really listen very carefully.”

Themes of lower significance. Collaboration and engagement and input and feedback recorded 26 of the 137 codes (19%) within the concern domain. The code that produced the least number of codes was accessibility as it generated seven codes (5%) within the domain. It is important to note that the exemplary urban superintendents discussed the importance of remaining assessable to school board members during the interview. Accessibility also surfaced in some of the dominant codes such as communication, relationship and rapport, and governance training. Table 7 shows the frequencies of each of the five themes as described and coded by interviews with the exemplary urban superintendents.

Table 7

Qualitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Concern

Themes	Frequency	%
Communication	40	29.10
Relationship & rapport	33	24.00
Governance training	31	22.60
Collaboration & engagement and input & feedback	26	18.97
Accessibility	7	5.10

Note. $N = 137$.

Quantitative and qualitative comparison. The exemplary urban superintendents expressed the importance of five of the six survey questions posed on the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. They recorded a mean score range of 4.0625 and 5.6875. The exemplary urban superintendents prioritized strategies including meeting with school board members, treating school board members positively and with respect, and

demonstrating patience with questions from school board members over the importance of work-life balance, thus causing variance with the data results. The quantitative data results and the qualitative data results are consistent as only two of the five exemplary urban superintendents briefly discussed setting parameters for work-life balance. The remaining survey questions received ratings that fell within the *agree* to *strongly agree* range and the data from the qualitative interview, particularly the communication, relationship and rapport, governance training, and collaboration and engagement and input and feedback themes produced 130 of the 137 codes (95%) illustrating alignment between the data sets.

Data Results for Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, “What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through candor?” For the purposes of this study, candor was defined as “communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information” (Gordon & Gilley, 2012; O’Toole & Bennis, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

Quantitative summary—candor. The survey data results for the fourth research question were organized by each question within the candor domain. The exemplary urban superintendents who participated in the study recorded a mean range between 4.875 and 5.750. The results fell between the *somewhat agree* and *strongly agree* range. The survey question that received the highest mean score was, “I engage board members in discussions about the direction and vision for the district.” The survey question generated a mean score of 5.7500 and a standard deviation of 0.447. Also, 75.0% of the

respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The survey question, “I am open, authentic, and straightforward with all board members,” recorded a mean score of 5.6250 and a standard deviation of 0.5000. Also, 62.50% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agree* with the survey question. It is interesting to note that the exemplary urban superintendents surveyed recognized the importance of candor when building trust with and between school board members and the results are consistent with the literature. Harvey and Drolet (2004) indicated that honest and direct communication, regardless of whether the receiver of the information wants to hear it, will foster respect and earn trust.

The survey question that recorded the lowest mean score was, “I take on issues head on, even the ‘undiscussables.’” The survey question recorded a mean of 4.8750 and a standard deviation of 0.885. Also, 25.0% indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The results contradicted those of Harvey and Drolet (2004) as four exemplary urban superintendents *somewhat agreed* with the survey question, and one exemplary urban superintendent indicated that he or she *disagreed* with the survey question. Table 8 summarizes the overall data results by survey question.

Qualitative summary and major findings—candor. Each of the five exemplary urban superintendents who participated in a face-to-face interview was asked two questions within the candor domain. The candor domain generated six themes, two of which were to be considered major findings. The themes collectively produced a total of 151 codes within the candor domain.

Communication. The most important theme within the candor domain was communication as it produced 54 codes (36%) falling into this theme. The data collected

Table 8

Quantitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Candor

Candor	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Disagree somewhat		Agree somewhat		Agree		Strongly agree		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
I engage in open communication with all board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	2	12.50%	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	10	62.5%	5.3125	1.0780
I share openly with board members when things are going wrong.	0	0.0%	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	4	25.00%	10	62.5%	5.3750	1.0870
I engage board members in discussions about the direction and vision for the district.	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	4	25.00%	12	75.0%	5.7500	0.4470
I create a safe environment where board members feel free to have differences of opinion.	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	12.50%	6	37.50%	8	50.0%	5.3750	0.7187
I am open, authentic, and straightforward with all board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	6	37.50%	10	62.5%	5.6250	0.5000
I take on issues head on, even the “undiscussables.”	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	4	25.00%	7	43.75%	4	25.0%	4.8750	0.8850

were consistent with the literature. Covey and Merrill (2006) expressed the importance of straight talk. Specifically, Covey and Merrill indicated that speaking the truth tactfully builds relationship trust. Superintendent C discussed the importance of notifying the school board when concerns arose within the organization. Superintendent C stated, “I’m always apprising them of the details. They appreciate the information and that builds trust. They appreciate not being surprised, not being let down, not being blindsided by their constituents around initiatives.” Superintendent C also discussed the importance of using candor with board members when behavior warrants it. Superintendent C stated, “I’ll call them personally. I don’t normally bring that up in closed session when they’re all there. I certainly would never bring that up in open session. I have one-on-one conversations with them, and typically that changes the behavior.” Superintendent E reiterated the importance of candor by stating, “You can’t be afraid to let the wounds show. Something may not be going so well and trying to keep the board from it may be damaging in the long run. Better to be upfront with it.” Superintendent D gave direct, honest feedback to board members during the one-on-one meetings. Superintendent D stated, “We may disagree. We’ve had upset conversations where people felt like they’re not being heard, but guess what? We circle right back around, and we squash it.” Superintendent A recalled using relationship and rapport to deliver a message to a board member lightheartedly. Superintendent A stated,

I sat down with the other board member, it was like, hey, I don’t know if you noticed this, but you were still on camera, and you seemed frustrated by those comments, and it was very visible in your body language. By having that

relationship with that board member, I was able to joke, it was like, yeah, you shouldn't play poker.

Input and feedback. The input and feedback theme was the second highest rated theme as it generated 32 codes (21%) within the domain. The importance the exemplary urban superintendents reported aligned with Bracey's (2002) statement, "The purpose of feedback is always to help build a trusting relationship in working toward a shared goal" (p. 23). All five exemplary urban superintendents interviewed discussed the importance of providing feedback to school board members individually during one-on-one sessions. Superintendent C reiterated the importance of providing feedback and input to board members by indicating, "You got to call them on it even if they're board members. It's intimidating but you have to call them on it because they are public officials. Whatever they say or do is being watched." Superintendent E recalled a different strategy and stated, "I have a survey that goes out after every board meeting. That's excellent feedback. They have no hesitation about giving me feedback. By the same token, I have no problem giving them feedback."

Responsiveness and follow through recorded 21 codes (14%) and vulnerability and transparency secured 18 codes (12%) within the candor domain. The codes that produced the least number of frequencies were accessibility and relationship and rapport as they each produced 13 codes (9%) within the domain. Table 9 shows the frequencies of each of the six themes as described and coded by interviews with the exemplary urban superintendents.

Table 9

Qualitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Candor

Themes	Frequency	%
Communication	54	35.76
Input & feedback	32	21.19
Responsiveness & follow through	21	13.90
Vulnerability & transparency	18	12.94
Accessibility	13	8.60
Relationship & rapport	13	8.60

Note. $N = 151$.

Quantitative and qualitative comparison. The exemplary urban superintendents expressed the importance of the survey questions posed on the candor domain as they recorded a mean score range of 4.875 to 5.750. The results ranged from *agree somewhat* to *strongly agree*. Although the quantitative survey results produced some variance, the questions that recorded the highest mean scores and the most frequent *strongly agree* responses, aligned with the themes generated from the qualitative data results. Specifically, communication and input and feedback collectively generated 86 codes (57%) of all themes generated. Also, the survey question, “I take on issues head on, even the ‘undiscussables,’” produced the lowest mean score of 4.875, and the lowest strongly agree response rate of 25%. It is interesting to note that the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed adamantly discussed the importance of using candor, regardless of the circumstances, yet produced the lowest results on the quantitative survey.

Data Results for Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked, “What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board

members through connection?” For the purposes of this study, connection was defined as “a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness” (Oliver & Sloan, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White et al., 2016).

Quantitative summary and major findings—connection. Each of the 16 participating exemplary urban superintendents was asked to respond to each of the six survey questions within the connection domain. The response choices ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The respondents recorded a mean range from 5.0625 to 5.8125, which falls between the *agree* and *strongly agree* range. It is interesting to note that the exemplary urban superintendents surveyed recognized the importance of connection when building trust with and between school board members and the results are consistent with the literature. Blanchard, Olmstead, and Lawrence (2013) emphasized the importance of showing genuine interest, and a high level of involvement and connectedness with individuals when building trust within an organization.

The survey question, “I display behavior that is aligned with the values and beliefs of the school district,” received the highest mean score of 5.8125 and standard deviation of 0.403. Also, 85% of respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with that survey question. The survey question, “I give voice to the district vision and shared values of the district,” received the second highest mean score of 5.7500 and a standard deviation of 0.447. Also, 75% of respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with that survey question. The survey question, “I am accepting to and receptive to the ideas and opinions of all board members,” received the lowest mean score of 5.0625, the highest standard deviation of .9287, and 37.5% of the respondents indicated that they

strongly agreed with the survey question. Table 10 summarizes the overall data results by survey question.

Qualitative summary and major findings—connection. Each of the five exemplary urban superintendents who participated in face-to-face interviews was asked two questions within the connection domain. Seven themes emerged from the interviews, three of which are considered to be major findings. The themes collectively produced a total of 129 codes. Superintendent C summarized connection as “an important piece of connection is always learning what is important to your board members and trying to make connections with them based on what is personally and professionally important to them.” Superintendent C’s insight into connection and the data collected align closely with the literature and serve as the third element of Blanchard et al.’s (2013) ABCD formula for trust.

Relationship and rapport. The most important theme within the connection domain was relationship and rapport as it commanded 42 of the 129 codes (33%) falling into this theme. The importance the exemplary urban superintendents reported aligned with White et al.’s (2016) statement, “Approachability and affability can go a long way toward building trust” (p. 15). Superintendent B stated, “I’ve always found that the relationships were the most important factor above and beyond budget, personnel, student achievement.” Superintendent E concurred with Superintendent B and added, “It’s extremely important the board feel that they can talk with each other and with me openly, honestly about how they feel. I guide and work with them in a way that they’ll listen and I’ll listen to them.” Superintendent E also emphasized the importance of tending to a personal connection by “bringing humanity to a board team through celebrating

Table 10

Quantitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Connection

Connection	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Disagree somewhat		Agree somewhat		Agree		Strongly agree		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
I am accepting to and receptive to the ideas and opinions of all board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	6.25%	3	18.75%	6	37.50%	6	37.50%	5.0625	.9287
I am truthful, and frank in all interpersonal communications with board members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	1	6.25%	6	37.70%	9	56.20%	5.5000	.6324
I display behavior that is aligned with the values and beliefs of the school district.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	3	18.80%	13	81.25%	5.8125	0.403
I give voice to the district vision and shared values of the district.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	4	25.00%	12	75.00%	5.7500	0.447
I engaged board members in recognition and celebrations of school district successes.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	5	31.25%	11	68.75%	5.6875	0.478
I listen carefully to understand and clarify issues.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	0	0.0%	6	37.50%	10	62.50%	5.6250	0.500

birthdays, celebrating accomplishments, speaking with them in front of the other board members about things going on in their lives so they get to know each other, I think, is huge.”

Communication. Communication was the second most important theme for the exemplary urban superintendents based on a response rate of 31 codes (24%) within the connection domain. Subthemes within communication, including “responsive” and “transparent” communication aligned closely with the literature. White et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of providing timely feedback in way that is compassionate to those receiving the information and also creating transparency by sharing information that provides context and understanding.

Superintendent D emphasized the importance of “honest and direct” communication. Superintendent D stated, “You need to be honest with yourself. If I’m going to build this positive relationship with the board, I have to be honest with them and they have to be honest with me.” Superintendent D discussed honesty without fear of repercussions when stating, “You can’t be worried about what comes with that. You cannot have a fear of making change, which means you might have to leave that job.” Superintendent B discussed the importance of consistent and ongoing communication: “I schedule weekly, meetings with the president, the vice president, and then have an expectation, whether I initiate or they initiate, formal or informally, that conversation or a meeting every week with each trustee.” Superintendent A discussed the importance of proactive communication: “I don’t let issues simmer. Sometimes superintendents will wait till the weekly newsletter to let board members know, or to just let the president know. I forward those e-mails immediately to the board.”

Governance training. The governance training theme produced 31 codes (24%) within the connection domain. The data results are consistent with the literature as the CSBA (n.d.-c) highlighted the importance of governance training and practices to cohesive governance structures between superintendents and school board members. Superintendent E stated, “I facilitate them being teammates. I facilitate them being a true governance team that includes me. I do that to help them build their rapport, not just with me, but with each other.” Superintendent E went on to explain the strategy used to establish and maintain a cohesive governance team. Superintendent E stated, “Whatever you give one board member, you need to give all in terms of information, in terms of teaching, in terms of whatever. You must never create the atmosphere that one board member is getting something over another.” Superintendent E explained the importance of overcoming relationship challenges when communicating with the school board. Superintendent E stated, “There are people we may not care for. If that’s your board, that’s your board. You must work with them, and give them everything that you’re giving the ones that you do like.”

Themes of lower significance. Covey and Merrill (2006) identified transparency as an important behavior characteristic to utilize to build and improve trust. Also, White et al. (2016) identified transparency as one of the 10 behaviors necessary to build trusting relationships. It is interesting to note that the codes that fell with the honesty and transparency themes produced four codes, which accounted for 3% of the codes within the connection domain. While all five of the exemplary urban superintendents discussed the importance of honesty and transparency when building trust with and between school board members, the theme did not produce the data the other themes produced.

White et al. (2016) identified keep commitments or follow through, as one of the 10 behaviors necessary to build trusting relationships. It is interesting to note that the codes that fell within the follow-through theme generated four codes, producing 3% of the codes. While all five of the exemplary urban superintendents discussed the importance of follow through when building trust with and between school board members, the theme did not produce the data the other themes produced. Table 11 shows the frequencies of each of the themes as described and coded by interviews with the exemplary urban superintendents.

Table 11

Qualitative Summary of the Perceived Importance of the Trust Domain—Connection

Themes	Frequency	%
Relationship & rapport	42	32.55
Communication	31	24.00
Governance training	31	24.00
Collaboration & engagement/input & feedback	11	8.52
Accessibility	6	4.65
Follow through	4	3.10
Honesty & transparency	4	3.10

Note. $N = 129$.

Quantitative and qualitative comparison. The exemplary urban superintendents expressed the importance of connection as they recorded a mean score range of 5.0625 to 5.8125 on the connection domain. The quantitative survey results did not produce much variance. The survey questions, which recorded the highest mean scores and the most frequent *strongly agree* responses, aligned with the themes that produced the most frequent codes from the qualitative data. Specifically, relationship and rapport, communication, and governance training collectively produced 104 codes (81%). Also, the survey question, “I am accepting to and receptive to the ideas and opinions of all

board members,” produced the lowest mean score of 5.0625, and the lowest strongly agree response rate of 37.5%. The survey question is aligned with the collaboration and engagement/input and feedback themes, which produced only 11 codes (9%) within the connection domain.

Summary

The quantitative and qualitative data results identified and described the strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceived as most important when building trust with and between school board members through the following five domains: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The exemplary urban superintendents who completed the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D) supported the importance of the five domains, competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection evidenced by a total mean score of 5.46. The survey questions that generated the highest mean scores appeared within the consistency and the connection domains.

The following survey questions from the consistency domain generated a mean score of 5.8 or above and a *strongly agree* response rate of 80% or above. “I behave in a manner consistent with my role and responsibilities” produced a mean score of 5.875, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 87.5%; “I make commitments to board members I can keep” and “I keep my commitments to board members” each generated a mean score of 5.800 and a *strongly agree* response rate of 81.25%. Also, the survey question from the connection domain, “I display behavior that is aligned with the values and beliefs of the school district,” generated a mean score of 5.812, and a *strongly agree* selection rate of 81.25%.

The survey questions that generated the lowest mean score and *strongly agree* selection rate fell within the concern and candor domains. The survey question, “I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance,” produced a mean score of 4.060 and a *strongly agree* selection rate of 12.50%. Also, the survey question, “I take on issues head-on, even the ‘undiscussables,’” produced a mean score of 4.875, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 25.00% (see Table 12).

Table 12

Quantitative Summary of Major Findings

Domain	Survey question	Mean score	Strongly agree response rate
Consistency	I behave in a manner consistent with my role and responsibilities.	5.875	87.50%
Consistency	I make commitments to board members I can keep.	5.800	81.25%
Consistency	I keep my commitments to board members.	5.800	81.25%
Connection	I display behavior that is aligned with the values and beliefs of the school district.	5.812	81.25%
Concern	I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance.	4.060	12.50%
Candor	I take on issues head-on, even the “undiscussables.”	4.875	25.00%

The exemplary urban superintendents who participated in the interviews produced a total of 678 codes from the following five domains combined: competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. The exemplary urban superintendents illustrated the importance of communication. The theme surfaced in five out of the five domains, produced 205 total codes, and commanded 30% of the total codes. The exemplary urban

superintendents expressed great importance with establishing relationships and developing a rapport with school board members as the theme also appeared in five out of the five domains. Relationship and rapport produced 115 codes, which are 17% of the total codes. Finally, the exemplary urban superintendents expressed great importance with governance training as the theme appeared in four out of five domains. Master in Governance generated 108 codes, which are 16% of the total codes (see Table 13).

Table 13

Qualitative Summary of Major Findings

Themes	Frequencies	%
Communication	205	47.89
Relationship & rapport	115	26.86
Masters of Governance	108	25.23

Note. $N = 428$.

The exemplary urban superintendents who participated in the qualitative interview all discussed additional important themes and strategies, which were not dominant within the frequency counts. For instance, all of the exemplary urban superintendents interviewed expressed the importance of being accessible to individual board members through various communication channels. Also, the urban superintendents interviewed discussed the importance of remaining vulnerable within the relationship with school board members and reiterated the importance of straight talk or honest communication approaches and the need to follow through.

Chapter IV reported the detailed quantitative and qualitative data results on the research findings of this study. Chapter V discusses the findings of the study in more

detail. Chapter V also explores the unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for future studies, and closing remarks.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V begins with a brief summary of the purpose statement, research questions, methods, and population and sample. The chapter then describes major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research. This chapter ends with concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust between school board members.

Research Questions

1. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through competence?
2. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through consistency?
3. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through concern?
4. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through candor?
5. What do exemplary urban superintendents perceive as the most important strategies to build trust with and between school board members through connection?

Methodology

This study used an explanatory mixed-methods research design. The quantitative portion of the study was conducted through the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey (Appendix D). The peer researchers and faculty advisors developed the survey instrument. The survey was distributed electronically to 36 exemplary urban superintendents within the state of California. Of the 36 exemplary urban superintendents who were invited to participate in the quantitative portion of the study, 16 exemplary urban superintendents completed the survey. The survey asked multiple-choice questions ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* to identify what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection.

The qualitative portion of the study was conducted via face-to-face interviews with exemplary urban superintendents within the state of California. The interviews were conducted using a series of questions from the School Board Trust Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix E), which was developed by the peer researchers and faculty advisors. The interviews were used to identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important when building trust with and between school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. Five exemplary urban superintendents were chosen for face-to-face interviews.

Population and Sample

The overall population for this study consisted of 1,026 superintendents employed within the California Department of Education system. The population was narrowed to a target population of 149 superintendents working within urban school districts within the state of California. The sample for this research study included 16 exemplary urban school superintendents who work in California. While a mixed-methods design lends itself to various probability and nonprobability sampling strategies, nonprobability purposeful sampling was used to complete this study.

The sample for the study was 16 exemplary urban school superintendents serving urban school districts within the state of California. Superintendents who met four out of the following five criteria were eligible and received consideration for this study:

1. Superintendent has worked 3 or more years in his/her current district.
2. Superintendent and board have participated in governance training.
3. Superintendent participated in annual CSBA conference.
4. Superintendent showed evidence of a positive superintendent, board, and community relationships.
5. Superintendent was recommended by two retired superintendents who are members of a north/south superintendents group.

Trust Research Study Major Findings

The exemplary urban superintendents and school boards trust research study generated several major findings. The first two major findings consisted of the importance of the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection, and the importance of communication, relationship and rapport, and

governance training when building trust with and between school board members.

Additional major findings resulted from this research study. Survey questions that earned a mean score of 5.750 or above on the quantitative survey and the themes that generated the most codes on the qualitative measures were considered major findings. The findings are outlined below.

Major Finding 1: All Five Domains Are Important

The first major finding of the study was exemplary urban superintendents who utilize strategies within all five domains of *competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection* to build trust with and between school board members. While The Values Institute (TVI) used the five domains to identify the most trustworthy brands within the business sector, the exemplary urban superintendents reiterated the importance of the five domains when building trust within public education. Also, a body of literature including Covey and Merrill (2006), Tschannen-Moran (2014), Lencioni (2012), and White et al. (2016) referenced the importance of at least one or more strategies related to the five domains within their literature.

Major Finding 2: Engaging School Board Members in Vision Setting

Engaging school board members in discussions about the direction and vision for the school district through candor and transparency builds trust. Collaborative focus group committees sharing pertinent information during one-to-one meetings, leading a collaborative strategic planning process, and promptly sharing information are specific strategies used. This finding aligns with Glaser's (2015) literature of shared decision making through collaboration and with R. M. Williams's (1998) statement of the strategic planning process fostering transparency and organizational alignment for crucial decision

making over time. The results are also consistent with DuFour and Eaker's (1999) statement, "Collective inquiry is the engine of improvement, growth, and renewal in a professional learning community" (p. 25).

Major Finding 3: Aligning Behavior With Expectations

Displaying behavior that aligns with the values and beliefs of the school district builds trust with and between school board members. The results were among the highest rated strategies within the study and reflected a statement made by ancient Roman philosopher Seneca, "If a man knows not what harbor he seeks, any wind is the right wind" (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009, p. 46). Mostly, without aligned vision and beliefs, and agreed-upon destination, the superintendent and school board members are

left [to] their own devices to imagine one—a scenario that results in unharnessed and unfocused efforts, with everyone believing that what he or she is doing is right. A common understanding of the destination allows all stakeholders to align their improvement efforts. (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009, p. 46)

Major Finding 4: Aligning Behaviors With Expectations

Behaving in a manner consistent with the roles and responsibilities of an exemplary urban superintendent demonstrates consistency and builds trust with and between school board members, specifically, when superintendents exercise the professional behavior expected of a superintendent, regardless of the political climate. The results aligned with the literature; for example, when discussing whether or not a leader liked politics, White et al. (2016) pointed out the irrelevance of whether or not the leader liked politics and emphasized the importance of the leader behaving in a politically

astute fashion. The behavior drives attitude, thus providing consistency and fostering trust (White et al., 2016).

Major Finding 5: Making and Keeping Commitments

Exemplary urban superintendents who make and keep commitments with school board members demonstrate consistency and build trust with and between school board members. This finding is consistent with Covey and Merrill's (2006) 13 behaviors of high-trust people and supports the trust principles of integrity, performance, courage, and humility. The results also aligned with Covey and Merrill's statement, "When you make a commitment, you build hope; when you keep it, you build trust. Given the impact of violating commitments, it's vital to be careful with the commitments you make" (p. 215).

Major Finding 6: Communication-Clear and Concise, Predictable, Honest, and Timely

Clear and concise, predictable, honest, and timely communication practices represent strategies reflected within all five domains of trust and build trust with and between school board members. Strategies include clear and concise communication through scheduled meetings via telephone, e-mail, text, or in person; communicating the facts regardless of whether the information would be perceived as positive or negative; and timely communication, particularly in emergencies. The findings align with the literature, particularly that of White et al. (2016), "Communication is the mother's milk of an effective organization" (p. 148). Further, the findings aligned with Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner (1998) who indicated that communicating accurate information, explaining the rationale for decisions, and fostering an open communication forum for an exchange of ideas promote trustworthiness. Finally, Lencioni (2012)

discussed the importance of cascading information to avoid the spread of inaccurate information. When cascading information, one must provide accurate, consistent messaging, timely information, and real-time communication. Essentially, “if the best way to ensure that a message gets communicated throughout an organization is to spread rumors about it, then leaders simply ought to go out and tell ‘true rumors’” (Lencioni, 2012, p. 144).

Major Finding 7: Relationship and Rapport Are Critical

Exemplary urban superintendents who take the time to get to know school board members both personally and professionally will establish a deeper connection and build trust with and between school board members. Exemplary urban superintendents use communication as the first step to developing relationships with school board members. Exemplary urban superintendents also use governance training and strategies learned from governance training to self-reflect and work collaboratively, thus strengthening the relationship and rapport amongst governance team members. The findings are consistent with the literature as Harvey and Drolet (2006), who stated, “Sociability fosters interpersonal commitment. When I care about you as a person, I am more likely to work with you as a team member” (p. 24). Harvey and Drolet added that relationships that are balanced with purpose and are committed through joy are more productive.

Major Finding 8: Governance Training Is Important

Superintendents and school board members who participate in and utilize strategies acquired from governance training develop strong working relationships through mutually agreed-upon protocols. Governance training should be used to bring new school board members on board and be reviewed periodically to remind and refresh

the governance team of their working norms. This finding aligns with the research from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) as the organization designed a training structure to provide superintendents and school board members with the knowledge and skills to build and support effective governance structures through a sequence of courses. The CSBA found over 2,000 board members and superintendents who participated in the Masters in Governance program, “90% of the graduates highly recommended the program for governance teams; and more than 80% reported the overall program gave them the knowledge base needed to perform their governance responsibilities” (CSBA, n.d.-c, para. 5).

Unexpected Findings

There were unexpected findings in this study. The first unexpected finding was that the exemplary urban superintendents reported inconsistencies with candor. While the exemplary urban superintendents referenced candor throughout the interviews, themes related to candor overlapped into the other four domains. Ironically, the survey question, “addressing issues head-on, even the ‘undiscussables,’” only recorded a mean score of 4.875, which was the second lowest rated survey question within the study. The results fell within the *somewhat agree to agree* range.

The next unexpected finding in this study was that the exemplary urban superintendents reported inconsistencies with the importance of governance. The exemplary urban superintendents referenced governance training and strategies acquired from governance training throughout the interviews, but did not rate governance and accountability with the same level of importance on the survey. Specifically, the survey questions, “I let board members know what is expected from them as members of a

governance team” and “I hold myself and board members accountable for actions,” generated the lowest mean score on the consistency domain.

The final unexpected finding in this study was that the exemplary urban superintendents reported inconsistencies with the importance of taking input from school board members. The exemplary urban superintendents described strategies to engage school board members in collaborative strategic planning activities throughout the interview, but the survey question, “I am accepting to, and receptive to the ideas and opinions of all board members,” was recorded with a mean score of 5.0625, which was the lowest rated survey question within the connection domain.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made based on the exemplary urban superintendents’ responses to the survey questions and the experiences shared during the face-to-face interviews.

Conclusion 1: The Importance of the Five Domains

Exemplary urban superintendents understand that the culmination of skills required includes strategies within all five trust domains. Leaders who do not practice all domains of trust building will have little success in building the human capital necessary for transformational change. When surveyed, the exemplary urban superintendents shared the importance of each domain by recording the following total mean scores within the *agree* to *strongly agree* range: consistency (5.600), connection (5.570), competence (5.450), candor (5.380), and concern (5.290). The conclusions aligned with Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson’s (2010) transformational leadership strategies. Specifically, these included but were not limited to stakeholder engagement,

communication strategies, visioning and understanding conflict resolution, and repairing broken relationships and re-establishing trust.

Conclusion 2: Communication, Relationship and Rapport, and Governance

Training

It was concluded that superintendents who use communication to build a relationship and rapport with school board members will have more support and will achieve more significant change and growth in the organization. In addition, it was concluded that superintendents and board members who participate in governance training will develop greater trust resulting in organizational success. The conclusions are supported by the results of the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey as the three major themes generated a total of 678 total codes that appeared in at least four of the five domains. The conclusions also align with those of Waters and Marzano (2006) who found a strong correlation between the quality of district leadership and the achievement of the school district.

Conclusion 3: Vision Setting

Superintendents who engage the school board in a collaborative process of vision setting will earn the support necessary to make transformational changes within the organization. When surveyed, the exemplary urban superintendents identified facilitating the teamwork approach as the most important strategy used to demonstrate competence and build trust with and between school board members. The survey question commanded a mean score of 5.750, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 75%. Leading vision setting and managing the strategic actions of the school district was an important strategy to employ to demonstrate competence and build trust with and between school

board members. The strategy commanded a mean score of 5.687, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 68.75%. As supported in the literature, Harvey and Drolet (2006) discussed the importance of strategic planning for clarifying the direction of the school district, solving problems within the organization, strengthening expertise, and building teamwork.

Conclusion 4: Honest and Transparency

Exemplary urban superintendents who do not demonstrate high levels of integrity through honesty, transparency, responsiveness, and follow through in all aspects of their work will experience great difficulty establishing trust with board members. The failure to demonstrate integrity through honesty, transparency, responsiveness, and follow through will also compromise the superintendent's tenure within the organization. This conclusion was supported by the results of the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. When asked about the level of predictability with scheduled communication procedures and reports, followed by actions consistent with the predetermined plan, the exemplary urban superintendents generated a mean score of 5.875, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 87.5%. Also, when asked about making commitments to board members that they can keep, and keeping commitments with board members, the strategy generated a mean score of 5.800, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 81.25%. S. M. Williams and Hatch (2012) conducted a study and found that the superintendent's ability to successfully develop internal relationships and foster a climate of trust, as measured by integrity, empowering and developing others, and modeling, was directly related to the superintendent's tenure.

Conclusion 5: Values and Beliefs

Superintendents who focus on identifying base values and beliefs of the organization and who consistently use them to make decisions will develop trust and strong relationships with their school board members. When surveyed, the three conclusions produced mean scores of 5.8125, 5.750, and 5.0625 respectively. The conclusions aligned with the strategies identified within Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership style as the exemplary urban superintendents emphasized the importance of getting to know the board members as individuals, dedicating time to foster the relationships over time, and listening to and taking the time to understand the differing points of view.

Conclusion 6: Communication

Superintendents who do not communicate with honesty, candor, and transparency would not build trust with school board members and would have a short tenure as superintendent. When surveyed about honesty, trustworthiness, transparency, and clear communication, the exemplary urban superintendents recorded a mean score of 5.750 and a standard deviation of 0.447. Also, 75% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. When surveyed about remaining open, authentic, and straightforward with all board members with various communication protocols, the exemplary urban superintendents recorded a mean score of 5.625 and a standard deviation of 0.500, and 62.5% of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The findings unequivocally identified direct communication as the impetus to demonstrating candor and building trust with and between school board members. The literature supports the conclusions as Covey and Merrill (2006)

emphasized the importance of “straight talk” and the implications of the trust tax when information was inaccurate, incomplete, or spun by the leader.

Exercising candor presented political challenges between the exemplary urban superintendents and school board members. The courageous conversations required to take on issues head on, even the “undiscussables,” caused hesitation among the exemplary urban superintendents. The survey question recorded a mean of 4.875 and a standard deviation of 0.8850. Also, only 25% of exemplary urban superintendents indicated that they *strongly agreed* with the survey question. The data results contradicted the results from the interview as open, honest, and direct communication penetrated every domain.

Conclusion 7: Relationships Development Through Personal Connection

Superintendents who take time to get to know board members personally by learning about their interests, acknowledging accomplishments, celebrating holidays, and showing an empathic side when challenges within their personal lives emerge, will build a high level of trust. These conclusions were supported by a total mean score of 5.290, which fell within the *agree* to *strongly agree* range on the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey. This conclusion also aligned with the literature as Crowley (2011) emphasized the importance of leaders connecting with their constituents on a personal level. Crowley shared San Diego State University President Stephen Weber’s success with significantly increasing the graduation rate at the university. Weber attributed his success to personal connections with his staff and stated, “If you want exceptional results from people who work for you, you need to make a personal connection with them” (Crowley, 2011, p. 80).

Conclusion 8: Work-Life Balance

Superintendents who do not develop work-life balance will not have the physical or emotional energy to perform well as a superintendent and, as a result, will decrease the board's trust in the superintendent. This conclusion is contrary to the responses of superintendents in this study who did not give high value to work-life balance. When asked if they demonstrated work-life balance, the exemplary urban superintendents generated a mean score of 4.060, and a *strongly agree* response rate of 12.5%. The results suggested that the exemplary urban superintendents *somewhat agreed to agreed* with the importance of work-life balance. Also, only two exemplary superintendents discussed the importance of setting communication parameters and office hours. Acquiring exemplary status requires a time commitment and the exemplary urban superintendents were willing to compromise work-life balance by compromising late nights and weekends with family to appease school board members.

The imbalance between work and life is a common theme with the workforce within the United States. In 2018, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) studied 38 countries around the world and found that, on average, employees within the United States spent 14.4 hours or 60% of their day for personal care and leisure times, which ranked 30th out of 38 countries studied. Also, Rutgers University and the University of Connecticut conducted a study and found that 90% of working adults were concerned that they do not spend enough time with their families (Lockwood, 2003). While the long hours and sacrifice may be considered a badge of courage or a token of loyalty, the conflict between work and family poses psychological interference from both work-to-family and family-to-work, thus

compromising the return on investment in both areas (Lockwood, 2003). Mainly, “juggling competing demands is tiring if not stressful and brings lower productivity, sickness, and absenteeism, so work/life balance is an issue for all employees and all organizations” (Lockwood, 2003, p. 2).

Implications for Action

This research supported the position that exemplary urban superintendents build trust with and between school board members by demonstrating strategies associated with competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. Also, the research supported that without demonstrating strategies from one of the five domains, the exemplary urban superintendent’s ability to build trust with and between school board members was compromised. The following section provides implications that should be implemented to ensure that exemplary urban superintendents build trust with and between school board members.

Implication 1: Professional Development

It is recommended that the school board include professional development requirements as part of the superintendent’s contract to support a high level of skill, knowledge, and organizational growth. As a requirement of the superintendent’s contract, the superintendent develops and presents a professional learning plan to the school board as part of his or her end-of-year evaluation, which specifies actions to address the five domains of trust and the importance of communication, relationship and rapport, and governance training. The professional learning plan describes the progress made in the current year’s plan and identifies growth areas. The school board should also provide financial support for the superintendent to participate in professional

organizations and associations that offer opportunities to engage other superintendents in conversation and sharing of best practice strategies.

Implication 2: Self-Assessment

It is recommended that a governance team trust self-assessment be created to provide feedback that serves as a barometer to diagnose the level of trust with and between school board members. The assessment tool should include the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection, and the major themes generated from this study including communication, relationship and rapport, and governance training. The trust assessment should be used in conjunction with existing self-assessments including Larick and White's Transformational Leadership Skills Inventory (TLSi), 360-degree feedback, focus groups, and town hall meetings, or the Workplace Inventory (WPI) as data to assess governance team health. Once the data are collected, and the level of trust is diagnosed, the superintendents and school board members should highlight strength and growth areas in a professional growth plan designed to build trust with and between school board members.

Implication 3: Hiring Process

Leadership skills that develop trust should be an essential aspect of the screening and superintendent hiring process. School board members and professional search firms should include the trust self-assessments, along with other self-assessments to gauge the importance of trust beliefs and trust behaviors evident in their current role. The trust screening tools should be used while conducting preinterview screenings interviews with references and while visiting previous employment sites. Also, the five domains, competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection, and the major themes

generated from this study including communication, relationship and rapport, and governance training should be used to formulate interview questions, develop presentation prompts, and guide pre- and postinterview reference check inquiries.

Implication 4: Ongoing Dialogue

It is recommended that the superintendent and school board members conduct a formal meeting two times per year to review their work as a governance team. The board should memorialize the proposed meeting in the superintendent's contract to ensure that it occurs. The trust assessment should also be used at least once per year, and the results should be discussed in the superintendent/board session facilitated by an independent consultant experienced in conducting superintendent-board workshops. The more explicit the superintendent and school board members are about discussing the importance of building trust among one another, the more likely they will use the strategies within this study to achieve it.

Implication 5: Executive Coaching

The school board should include an executive coach as part of the superintendent's contract. The executive coach should meet with the superintendent at least once per month to review the progress of the school district, climate, and culture, communications, relationships, and work with the governance team regarding trust building. The executive coaches should use the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection and the major themes of communication, relationship and rapport, and governance training to assess the level of trust with and between school board members. Techniques, including conversation, press releases, and

job shadowing would assist the executive coach with advising the superintendents and school board members with gaining a deeper level of trust.

Implication 6: Work-Life Balance

It is recommended that school board members and professional organizations including CSBA and ACSA explicitly discuss the time commitment associated with being an exemplary urban superintendent and introduce strategies to create balance. The superintendent should engage in self-reflection and personal planning to identify a menu of strategies for implementing work-life balance. The superintendent and school board members should assess and discuss work-life balance as a governance team, and when working with third-party facilitators and executive coaches. Work-life balance should be formally discussed in the superintendent's evaluation. The more explicit the governance team members are about discussing work-life balance, the more likely they will identify and implement strategies to achieve it.

Implication 7: Educating Constituencies

All organizations and stakeholders who have a vested interest in public education should engage in scholarly discussions at professional meetings and conferences about how trust is developed, earned, and maintained as a part of exemplary leadership. The thematic team members should publish scholarly articles designed to inform educators and community members about the importance of trust with and between school board members. The literature will also provide insight to help quickly diagnose trust behaviors and trust strategies being used within the organization. A trusting relationship between the superintendent and school board members promotes organizational growth; relationships built on mistrust perpetuate uncertainty and create instability within the

district. Awareness will help the constituents make educated decisions when considering elected officials and supporting superintendents.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings in this study generated recommendations to broaden, expand, and strengthen the study. Examining how exemplary urban school board members build trust with superintendents and among themselves would add significantly to this study. Additionally, replicating the study with a broader population, identifying strategies to restore trust once it has been compromised, identifying the most important trust strategies by gender, and examining communication in greater depths would significantly add to the body of literature.

Recommendation 1: Case Study of Superintendents' Longevity

It is recommended that a qualitative case study be conducted with superintendents who have been in their current district for 10 or more years. The case study would discover the degree of importance the five domains of trust had on their longevity. The researcher should then compare the results from that study to the results of this study. The results would add to and strengthen the body of literature that currently exists.

Recommendation 2: Replicate the Study in Other States Beyond California

It is recommended that an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study be conducted to include superintendents in other states beyond California. The study will identify and describe what strategies exemplary urban superintendents perceive as most important to build trust with and between school board members using the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. This study identified 149 urban superintendents in California. Thematic peer researchers conducted parallel

studies focused on alternative demographics, including suburban, rural, and ROCPs.

This study has created opportunities for researchers to expand the research by studying a larger population of exemplary urban superintendents, including superintendents from other states within the country.

Recommendation 3: Restoring Trust Once it Is Compromised

It is recommended that a phenomenological study be conducted to discover what strategies school board members use to restore broken trust when hiring a new superintendent. It is also recommended that a mixed-methods study be conducted in collaboration with the CSBA and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to identify what professional development elements of the governance workshops the superintendent and board members perceive as most important to develop trust with and between school board members. The team of researchers, CSBA, and ACSA should develop an improvement cycle designed to restore trust once it has been compromised. The results of the proposed study in conjunction with the Education Trust (n.d.) improvement process cycle—diagnose, plan, implement, monitor, and intensify action—should guide the collaborative discussion and serve as the premise for professional learning. The results of the proposed study would serve as a continuum of this study and add to the body of literature that currently exists.

Recommendation 4: Gender Comparison

It is recommended that a comparative research study take place with exemplary male and female superintendents to identify and describe the differences in strategies male and female superintendents use to build trust with and between board members.

The researcher should then compare the results from that study to the results of this study. The results would add to and strengthen the body of literature that currently exists.

Recommendation 5: Components of Communication

It is recommended that a team of researchers collaborate with organizations such as CSBA and ACSA to identify to what degree current workshops are successful in building trust with and between school board members. The research team should then incorporate the data gathered from the professional organizations and the information obtained from this study to develop professional learning opportunities that emphasize the importance of disaggregated components of communication. Specific communication focal points include honest and direct, clear and concise, and predictable and continuous. The professional learning would help superintendents, and school board members acquire a broader and deeper understanding of the importance of communication when building trust with and between school board members.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

When I started this journey, I had a novice understanding of trust. I understood that trust was the secret ingredient to productive relationships, but I could not thoroughly define or identify its components. I did not understand the complexities to articulate the five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection on a scholarly level. Although this journey was stressful and turbulent, the adversity contributed to my growth. I am now a transformational agent of trust.

As a servant within the public education system for almost 20 years, I am concerned with the political climate this institution is experiencing. Specifically, public education is under attack, and the battle is taking place on multiple fronts. Even more

concerning, the opposition comes from the highest branches of the federal government as massive financial reductions in favor of school-choice vouchers are being proposed. While Congress rejected many of the proposals, the aspiration to destroy the public education system is the current reality. Now more than ever, urban superintendents and school board members must unite and work collaboratively to obtain growth through the political firestorm.

As Bowers (2016) stated, “In this uncertain political environment, it is more critical than ever to a school board’s and superintendent’s effectiveness to develop a collaborative, trusting, working relationship; yet the conditions are not conducive, and the odds are not favorable” (p. 7). The relationship between the superintendent and the school board remains paramount for organizational growth; thus, superintendents and school board members must shift this narrative immediately. The results of this study should serve as a guide to building trust and transforming organizations.

This study validated that exemplary urban superintendents believe that all five domains of competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection are essential to developing trust with and between school board members. As the findings of this study should serve as a blueprint to transformational change, the courage and the precision needed to execute transformational change will be the struggle. I leave the reader with inspiration from *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley (n.d.) to muster the courage and confidence to be the change.

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informational Letter

September 2018

Dear Urban Superintendent,

We are a group of doctoral candidates in Brandman University's Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership program in the School of Education. We are conducting a thematic, mixed method case study that will identify and describe what strategies superintendents use to build trust with school board members using the five domains of Weisman's trust model (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection). In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies superintendents use to build trust between board members using the five domains of Weisman's trust model.

We are asking for your assistance in the study by participating in an interview which will take approximately 60 minutes and will be setup at a time and location convenient for you. If you agree to participate in the interview, you can be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files, accessible only to the researchers. No employer will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. Further, you may be assured that the researchers are not in any way affiliated with your school district. The research investigator, Damon Wright, is available at dwright4@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 925-895-1659, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely, Damon Wright , M.A.Ed. Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Urban Superintendents Build Trust with and Between School

Board Members the “Wright” Way

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Damon J. Wright, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to identify and describe what strategies superintendents use to build trust with school board members using the five domains of Weisman’s trust model (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection). In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies superintendents use to build trust between board members using the five domains of Weisman’s trust model.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview or survey. The interview will take place in person at my school site or by phone, and lasts about an hour. During the interview or survey, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences as a superintendent, who has experience building trust with and between school board members.

I understand that:

1. The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at my school site or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience. Surveys will also be utilized depending upon participants scheduling availability.
2. I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to determine whether the five domains of Weisman’s trust model (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection) have any effect on the Superintendent’s ability to build trust with and between school board members. The

findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

3. Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Damon J. Wright, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mr. Wright may be contacted by phone at (925) 895-1659 or email at dwright4@mail.brandman.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Keith Larick at larick@brandman.edu.
4. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
5. The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of five years by the investigator in a secure location.
6. No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Date

Signature of Witness (if appropriate)

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX D

Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey

Welcome to the Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey

Successful relationships are dependent on trust. Trust influences a culture which fosters continuous improvement and outcomes. In the field of public education, a trusting relationship between the school board and superintendent enhances the effectiveness of the governance team.

The superintendent and board relationship is a visible signal to staff and community as to the health of the district. How superintendents build trust with and between school board members is a first step in accomplishing the goals of the district.

This survey is part of a thematic dissertation study exploring how superintendents develop trust with and between school board members. This survey solicits your perceptions of the actions and strategies used to develop that trusting relationship.

All responses to this survey are confidential and anonymous. Please read the statement below giving your consent to participate before opening the survey.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

* 1. Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have received and read the following documents: the Informed Consent Form and the Brandman University Research Participants Bill of Rights and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button. The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate

AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey

Consistency

Consistency is the confidence that a person's pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

6-point scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	-------------------	----------------	-------	----------------

2. I behave in a manner consistent with my role and responsibilities.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

3. I create an environment where board members have opportunity to accomplish their goals and responsibilities.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

4. I let board members know what is expected from them as members of a governance team.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

5. I make commitments to board members I can keep.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

6. I keep my commitments to board members.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

7. I hold myself and board members accountable for actions.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

Competence is the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

6-point scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	-------------------	----------------	-------	----------------

8. I focus the work of board members on the quality of services the district provides to students, staff and community.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. I work with the board members to achieve the district's goals.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

10. I promote the capability of school board members.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

11. I create opportunities for board members to learn and grow.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

12. I promote collaborative decision making with the governance team.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

13. I lead vision setting and manage the strategic actions of the school district.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

Candor involves communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Giley, 2012; Tschannen-Mora, 2014; O'Toole & Bennis, 2009; Weisman & Jusino, 2016).

6-point scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	--------------	-----------------------

14. I engage in open communication with all board members.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. I share openly with board members when things are going wrong.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. I engage board members in discussions about the direction and vision for the district.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree Somewhat
- Agree Somewhat
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. I create a safe environment where board members feel free to have differences of opinion.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

18. I am open, authentic, and straightforward with all board members.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

19. I take on issues head on, even the “undiscussables.”

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

Concern is the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability, support, motivate and care for each other (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Covey, Merrill, & Covey, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 1988; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

6-point scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	-------------------	----------------	-------	----------------

20. I take time to meet personally with each board member to understand their concerns.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

21. I demonstrate appropriate work and life balance.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

22. I am a good listener.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

23. I treat each board member positively and with respect.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

24. I am patient with the questions and issues of interest to board members.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

25. I demonstrate respect and concern for each board member.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

Connection is a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness (Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Stovall & baker, 2010; White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016).

6-point scale

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	--------------	-----------------------

26. I am accepting to and receptive to the ideas and opinions of all board members.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

27. I am truthful, and frank in all interpersonal communications with board members.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

28. I display behavior that is aligned with the values and beliefs of the school district.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

29. I give voice to the district vision and shared values of the district.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

30. I engaged board members in recognition and celebrations of school district successes.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

31. I listen carefully to understand and clarify issues.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree Somewhat |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree | <input type="radio"/> Agree |
| <input type="radio"/> Disagree Somewhat | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

32. Thank you for completing this survey! If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, which will provide your knowledge and experience to the body of research on how superintendents build trust with and between school board members, please enter your contact information into the fields below. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and would occur at your office or a location that is convenient for you. This step is entirely optional and voluntary.

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol Script and Interview Questions

Brandman University IRB

Adopted

September 2018

Superintendent & School Board Interview Protocol Script and Interview Questions

Interviewer: Damon J. Wright

Interview time planned: Approximately one hour

Interview place: Participant's office or other convenient agreed upon location

Recording: Digital voice recorder

Written: Field and observational notes

Make personal introductions.

Opening Statement: [Interviewer states:] I greatly appreciate your valuable time to participate in this interview. To review, The purpose of this mixed methods study is to identify and describe what strategies superintendents use to build trust with school board members using the five domains of Weisman's trust model (competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection). In addition, it was the purpose of this study to identify and describe strategies superintendents use to build trust between board members using the five domains of Weisman's trust model. The questions are written to elicit this information.

Interview Agenda: [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about an hour today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter, and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for the purpose of this study. We will begin with reviewing the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Form, Brandman University's Participant's Bill of Rights, and the Audio Release Form. Then after reviewing all the forms, you will be asked to sign documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio Release Form. Next, I will begin the audio recorder and ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take

notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue on with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?

Definitions

Competence

Competence is the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Candor

Candor involves communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Giley, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; O'Toole & Bennis, 2009; Weisman & Jusino, 2016).

Concern

Concern is the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability, support, motivate and care for each other (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Covey & Merrill, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 1988; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

Connection

Connection is a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness (Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016).

Consistency

Consistency is the confidence that a person's pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

Background Questions:

1. Connection is about creating positive relationships & rapport with others. How have you developed positive relationships and rapport with *board members*?

Prompt: How do you see the establishment of positive relationships and rapport as contributing to trust with school board members?

2. In what ways have you developed shared values with *board members*?

Prompt: How do you see the establishment of shared values as contributing to trust with *board members*?

3. Research shows that leaders develop trust when they care for their employees' well-being. Tell me about some of the ways that you show you care for your *board members* and their well-being.

Prompt: How do you share yourself with your employees?

4. What are some of the ways you create a collaborative work environment for your *board members*?

Prompt: Can you provide some examples of how you make teams feel safe to dialogue in a collaborative environment?

Prompt: How do you manage failures among *board members*?

5. The literature for trust indicates that leaders who communicate openly and honestly tend to build trust with their employees. Please share with me some ways that have worked for you as the leader of your site to communicate openly and honestly with *board members*.

Probe: Can you describe a time when you perceive your communication with *board members* may have contributed to developing trust?

6. Two characteristics for a transparent leader are accessibility and being open to feedback. Please share some examples of how you demonstrate accessibility and openness to feedback.

Probe: How would you describe your feedback strategies for board members? Can you give me some examples?

7. The literature for trust indicates that leaders who demonstrate competence by fulfilling their role as expected establish credibility and develop trust with their *board members*.

Can you describe a time in which you feel your competence as a leader may have contributed to developing trust?

Probe: Please share with me some examples in which you feel you established your credibility within your role as the superintendent

8. Competent leaders value the expertise of others and invite participation of team members to solve problems through shared decision making. Please share with me some ways that have worked for you as the superintendent to invite participation in decision making with the school board?

Probe: Can you describe a time when you perceive school board participation in decision making may have contributed to developing trust?

9. What are some of the ways that you model leadership that is reliable and dependable?

Prompt: How do you establish expectations that help you to lead the board in a way that is dependable?

10. Can you provide an example of a crisis situation when your leadership was dependable and steadfast and developed trust with and between board?

Prompt: How do you ensure that your message to board members is consistent and true during a time of crisis?

APPENDIX F

Audio Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Urban Superintendents Build Trust with and Between
School
Board Members the “Wright” Way

**BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618**

I authorize Damon J. Wright, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Date

APPENDIX G

Superintendent & School Board Trust Survey Feedback Form

Survey Critique by Participants

As a doctoral student and researcher at Brandman University your assistance is so appreciated in designing this survey instrument. Your participation is crucial to the development of a valid and reliable instrument. Below are some questions that I appreciate your answering after completing the survey. Your answers will assist me in refining both the directions and the survey items.

You have been provided with a paper copy of the survey, just to jog your memory if you need it. Thanks so much.

1. How many minutes did it take you to complete the survey, from the moment you opened it on the computer until the time you completed it? _____
2. Did the portion up front that asked you to read the consent information and click the agree box before the survey opened concern you at all? ____
If so, would you briefly state your concern _____

3. Was the Introduction sufficiently clear (and not too long) to inform you what the research was about? ____ If not, what would you recommend that would make it better? _____

4. Were the directions to, and you understood what to do? ____
If not, would you briefly state the problem _____

5. Were the brief descriptions of the rating scale choices prior to your completing the items clear, and did they provide sufficient differences among them for you to make a selection? ____ If not, briefly describe the problem _____

6. As you progressed through the survey in which you gave a rating of # through #, if there were any items that caused you say something like, “*What does this mean?*” Which item(s) were they? Please use the paper copy and mark those that troubled you? Or if not, please check here: _____

Thanks so much for your help

APPENDIX H

Field-Test Participant Feedback Questions

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation.** Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?
2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?
4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview... (I'm pretty new at this)?

APPENDIX I

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation.

1. How long did the interview take? _____ Did the time seem to be appropriate?
2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?
3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?
4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?
6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX J

**National Institute of Health—Protecting Human Research Participants Certificate
of Completion**

